Letters from India (1583–1588)

Filippo Sassetti

2026

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Translator’s Introduction

Letters from India: Filippo Sassetti's Correspondence from Cochin and Goa, 1583–1588

I. A Florentine in the Estado da India

On April 8, 1583, Filippo Sassetti — Florentine merchant, humanist scholar, and member of the Accademia degli Alterati — sailed from Lisbon aboard a Portuguese carrack bound for India. He was forty-two years old, had never been to sea, and was profoundly anxious about the voyage. He would never return. Over the next five years, from the pepper warehouses of Cochin and the colonial capital of Goa, he wrote the thirty-two letters collected in this volume — the last sustained correspondence of his life, and the writings for which he is principally remembered.

These letters constitute one of the most remarkable bodies of European observation on sixteenth-century India. Written by a man of formidable erudition and relentless curiosity, they range across an extraordinary breadth of subjects: the Portuguese spice trade and its slow-motion collapse; the politics of the Zamorin of Calicut, the king of Cochin, and the Mughal emperor; the monsoon system and the annual rhythm of Indian Ocean shipping; the botany of cinnamon, pepper, and betel; the social organization of Indian castes; the practices of Brahmin physicians working from Sanskrit pharmacological texts; the diamond merchants who traveled ninety days from Agra with gems concealed inside their bodies; the silent finger-bargaining of the bazaar; and — in a passage that would not receive its due recognition for two centuries — the structural resemblances between Sanskrit and the languages of Europe.

Sassetti died in Goa in September 1588, probably of dysentery, at the age of forty-seven. His letters survived in autograph manuscripts, in copies made by friends and scribes, and in the archives of the Medici court. A selection of thirty-four was first published in the early eighteenth century in the *Prose Fiorentine*, though in a badly corrupted text. It was not until 1855 that the Florentine scholar Ettore Marcucci assembled the full collection of 111 letters — spanning Sassetti's entire adult life — in a critical edition for the Le Monnier press: *Lettere edite e inedite di Filippo Sassetti, raccolte e annotate da Ettore Marcucci* (Florence, 1855). The present translation draws on that edition, which remains the standard text.

II. Who Was Filippo Sassetti?

Sassetti was born in Florence in 1540 into an ancient and once-prominent family whose fortunes had declined. The Sassetti had been major bankers in the fifteenth century — it was Francesco Sassetti, general manager of the Medici bank, who commissioned Ghirlandaio's famous frescoes in Santa Trinita — but by Filippo's generation, the family lived in reduced circumstances. This tension between aristocratic self-image and financial precariousness runs through his entire correspondence; he speaks of having "nearly died of hunger" as an infant, and of being "accustomed since childhood to lack the necessaries."

His education, however, was first-rate. He studied at Pisa and became one of the most active members of the Accademia degli Alterati, Florence's leading literary academy, where his fellow members included Bernardo Davanzati (the future translator of Tacitus), Giambatista Strozzi (the poet), Lorenzo Giacomini, and Francesco Bonciani. He wrote literary criticism, composed a life of the Florentine military hero Francesco Ferrucci, translated portions of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and debated questions of language and literature with the greatest humanist of the age, Piero Vettori.

But scholarship could not pay the bills. In his late thirties, Sassetti reluctantly returned to commerce — or, as he put it, was forced to "re-merchantize" himself (*rimmercatantire*). Through the Florentine merchant Giambatista Rovellasco, who held contracts in the Portuguese pepper trade, Sassetti found his way to Lisbon and thence to India. He departed Florence in 1578, spent five years in Spain and Portugal learning the ropes of the *Estado da India* from the European end, and finally embarked for the East in 1583.

He arrived in Cochin in November 1583 and spent the remaining five years of his life shuttling between Cochin — where the annual pepper loading took place — and Goa, the colonial capital. He was never merely a merchant. He was, by temperament and training, an observer, a collector of information, a man who could not look at a cinnamon tree without wanting to compare it to Dioscorides, or meet a Brahmin physician without interrogating him about Sanskrit pharmacology. His commercial work gave him access; his humanist education gave him the framework to make sense of what he saw.

III. The Portuguese Estado da India

To understand these letters, one must understand the world Sassetti inhabited. The Portuguese *Estado da India* — literally the "State of India" — was not a territorial empire in the modern sense, but a chain of fortified trading posts, naval bases, and customs houses stretching from Mozambique to Macau. Established in the early sixteenth century following Vasco da Gama's arrival in Calicut in 1498, it was designed to control the spice trade by commanding the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean.

By Sassetti's time, the system was in visible decline. The letters document this with the precision of a man who handled the account books. The

pepper contracts that once enriched the Portuguese crown were yielding diminishing returns. Overland caravan routes — ox-trains of two or three thousand animals carrying pepper north from Malabar to Central Asia — were bypassing the Portuguese maritime monopoly entirely. The fortresses at Hormuz and Malacca were crumbling; the trade with China was conducted from Macao under a false name, the word "Portuguese" having been banned by the Chinese emperor for past offenses. The colonial soldiers had all become merchants, ruining both the military and the trade. Sassetti captures the Estado at the moment its imperial logic began to fail, and his analysis is remarkably clear-eyed for a man writing from inside the system.

The commercial architecture he describes is intricate: the annual monsoon calendar that dictated when ships could sail and where; the role of Moorish (Muslim) intermediaries who carried goods to Mecca under Portuguese license; the currency systems — *reales*, *seraphins*, *pagodas*, *larins*, *basalucchi* — that lubricated exchange across dozens of polities; the money-changers (*xaraffi*) who functioned as both bankers and currency speculators; the bottomry loans at fifty percent that financed the coastal trade. This is mercantile intelligence of the highest order, and it has no real parallel in the European literature of the period.

IV. India Observed

But Sassetti's letters are far more than commercial reports. They are the work of a Renaissance humanist confronting a civilization that did not fit any of his inherited categories, and rising magnificently to the challenge.

His account of visiting the Zamorin of Calicut (Letter CIII) is a set piece of ethnographic writing: the approach through flooded lanes bordered by poisonous hedges; the low palace with its ladder-like staircases and

trapdoor entries; the nearly naked prince sitting in the dark on a low bed, talking so fast that the interpreters could not follow, his elongated pierced ears hanging to his shoulders, heavy with gold and rubies. Sassetti records the scene with a painter's eye and then shifts to a hard-headed analysis of the triangular diplomacy between the Zamorin, the king of Cochin, and the Portuguese.

His description of the *Amocchi* — warriors sworn to die at their king's command, who when triggered went on suicidal rampages of destruction — is one of the earliest European accounts of the phenomenon that gave English the expression "to run amok." His explanation of the Indian caste system, the vegetarian practices of the Hindus, the opium dependency of the Muslim population, the augury-based decision-making of the merchant castes — all of this is reported with a combination of humanist curiosity and mercantile pragmatism that is distinctly his own.

He is not free of the prejudices of his time and station. He refers to Indians routinely as "Negroes" (*Negri*), a term that in sixteenth-century Italian carried racial condescension but not quite the specific charge it later acquired. He calls Hindus "Gentiles" (*Gentili*), using the classical term for pagans. He can be dismissive — the merchants of Gujarat are "fickle as leaves, timid as monkeys." But he is also capable of genuine intellectual respect, particularly toward the Brahmin scholars he encountered, and his curiosity almost always outweighs his contempt.

V. The Sanskrit Discovery

The passage for which Sassetti is most celebrated in the history of ideas occurs in Letter CX, to Bernardo Davanzati, written from Cochin in January 1588 — one of his last letters. After describing the medicinal properties of the *Cadirà* tree and its extract *Catù* (catechu), and after

attributing his information to a Sanskrit pharmacological text called the *Nighaṇṭu* as mediated by a Hindu physician, Sassetti writes:

> Their sciences are all written in a language which they call *Sanscruma*, which means "well articulated": of which there is no memory of when it was spoken… They learn it as we do Greek and Latin, and spend much more time on it, so that in six or seven years they become masters of it: and today's language has many things in common with it, among which are many of our words, and particularly of the numerals the 6, 7, 8, and 9 — *Dio* [God], *serpe* [serpent], and many others.

This is the earliest known European observation of the systematic lexical correspondences between Sanskrit and the languages of Europe. The numerals Sassetti noticed — Italian *sei, sette, otto, nove* against Sanskrit *ṣaṣ, sapta, aṣṭa, nava* — are indeed cognates, as are *Dio/deva* and *serpe/sarpa*. It would be nearly two hundred years before Sir William Jones delivered his famous 1786 lecture to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, proposing that Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin shared a common ancestor — the insight that launched comparative linguistics as a discipline. Sassetti saw the same thing, from the same soil, two centuries earlier. He lacked the theoretical framework to draw the full conclusion, but the observation itself is unmistakable.

It is worth noting that this was no casual aside. Sassetti had been actively investigating Indian scripts and languages throughout his time in India. He mentions receiving alphabets from Baccio Valori in Lisbon and bringing them to India for comparison. He reports that "these Gentiles tell me that on the mainland there are found very ancient columns with letters understood by no one." He observes towns in the Indian interior that retain the Greek element *Poli* in their names. And he records the Brahmins' astonishment at being questioned systematically about their learning: "They are amazed to see me asking them about many of these things,

because it has never happened to them before; and hearing some subject treated with method and from its principles, they look at one another's faces, as one stares at a person who guesses rightly." His linguistic observation was the fruit not of accident but of sustained, methodical inquiry.

VI. The Discourse on Cinnamon

Included within this collection (as an enclosure to Letter CV, addressed to Baccio Valori in January 1587) is Sassetti's *Discourse on Cinnamon* — a formal treatise examining whether the cinnamon of Ceylon is identical with the *cinnamomum* described by Dioscorides, Pliny, and Galen. It is a remarkable piece of empirical natural history.

Sassetti's method is to marshal the classical sources, extract the specific identifying marks they attribute to *cinnamomum* — its colors (white, black, variegated), its form (a woody shoot, not a mere bark), its reported place of origin (Troglodytice/Ethiopia, not Ceylon) — and then compare these systematically against the living cinnamon plant he has examined firsthand in Malabar and Goa. He commissioned specimens from Ceylon over two consecutive years. His conclusion is nuanced: the finest Ceylon cinnamon is indeed the same species as the ancients' *cinnamomum*, but what the ancients received and described was the entire stalk of the plant — wood, bark, nodes, and all — not the stripped bark that is sold as cinnamon today. The confusion arose, he argues, because goods are named for the entrepôt where they are traded, not the land where they grow — just as kermes is called "of Spain" though it grows in the Americas, and turpentine is called "Venetian" though Venice produces none.

The treatise was noticed in Sassetti's own time: the botanist Andrea Cesalpino cited it with honor in his 1613 *Appendix ad Libros De plantis*. Its

combination of textual scholarship, firsthand observation, and commercial knowledge represents a mode of inquiry that was characteristically Sassetti's — the humanist and the merchant reinforcing each other.

VII. The Correspondents

Sassetti's India letters were addressed to a circle of friends, family members, and patrons in Florence. Understanding who they were enriches the reading considerably.

Francesco Valori and **Baccio Valori** were close friends and prominent Florentine citizens. Francesco received some of Sassetti's most personal letters; Baccio, a man of scholarly interests, received the more learned correspondence, including the Discourse on Cinnamon and the letters on Chinese writing and Indian languages.

Lorenzo Canigiani received the longest and most ethnographically detailed letters — the great descriptions of Indian customs, dress, food, architecture, the pearl fishery, bezoar stones, and the deadly disease *mordaxi*. Sassetti clearly regarded Canigiani as his most appreciative audience for descriptive writing.

Maria Sassetti née Bartoli, his sister, received six letters full of family business, practical advice, and mordant humor. His counsel against marrying her young daughter to a man of fifty-seven is among the most vivid passages in the collection.

Piero Vettori, the great humanist and textual scholar, received the letter (not in this collection but in the earlier correspondence) containing key observations about Sanskrit. Vettori died at eighty-seven during the period of these letters, and Sassetti mourned him as an irreplaceable loss.

Grand Duke Francesco I of Tuscany and **Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici** (who would succeed his brother as Grand Duke in 1587) received formal letters of diplomatic intelligence and natural history. Sassetti sent the Grand Duke seeds, medicinal specimens, jasper stones from Cambay, and an exquisite Chinese silk pavilion worth a thousand seraphins. To the Cardinal he addressed his extraordinary (and unfulfilled) proposal for a seven-year journey from India to Malacca, the Moluccas, China, Manila, and New Spain — a circumnavigation of the known world.

Giambatista Strozzi, **Lorenzo Giacomini**, **Bernardo Davanzati**, **Alessandro Rinuccini**, **Michele Saladini**, and **Cavalier Piero Spina** were fellow members of the Florentine intellectual world — the circle of the Alterati and its extended network. Each received letters calibrated to his particular interests: Strozzi the literary man got the monsoon description; Giacomini the philosopher got the lodestone discussion; Davanzati the practical scholar got the catechu treatise with its Sanskrit excursus.

Two supplementary letters by other hands are included in the collection: one by **Giovanni Buondelmonti**, an associate who had traveled in India, and one by **Giambatista Vecchietti**, the great Orientalist and traveler, who arrived in Goa from Persia in 1587, lodged with Sassetti, and would later deliver his funeral oration in Florence.

VIII. A Note on the Translation

This translation is based on the text of Ettore Marcucci's 1855 edition. The original letters are written in sixteenth-century Tuscan Italian of a high literary register — Sassetti was, after all, a member of a literary academy devoted to questions of language. Marcucci's editorial apparatus is in nineteenth-century Italian, and his footnotes frequently discuss variant readings between manuscripts, points of grammar and vocabulary, and the

editorial choices of the earlier printed editions (*Prose Fiorentine*, Reggio edition, etc.).

The translator has aimed for accuracy over fluency. Where the Italian is syntactically elaborate — and Sassetti can spin a sentence across a full paragraph — the English preserves the architecture of the thought rather than breaking it into modern fragments. The register is intended to convey educated sixteenth-century correspondence: dignified but not artificially archaic.

Marcucci's footnotes have been translated in full. His textual notes (recording variant readings between manuscripts and printed editions) are retained as they stand, since they document the editorial history of the text. His explanatory notes — historical identifications, linguistic observations, cross-references — are likewise preserved.

Translator's notes, marked [TN:], have been added where Indian, Portuguese, or period-specific references would be opaque to English-language readers. These are used freely for the Indian material (place names, trade goods, social categories, currencies) and more sparingly for European references that an educated reader might be expected to recognize.

Portuguese and Indian terms are italicized and glossed on first occurrence. Place names are given in their standard English forms where these exist (Cochin, Goa, Lisbon, Ceylon) and otherwise in the form Sassetti uses, with identification in a translator's note. The OCR of the 1855 edition occasionally produces errors (fused words, misread characters); these have been silently corrected where the intended reading is clear.

IX. Sassetti's Death and Legacy

Sassetti's last dated letter in this collection is from February 1588. He died in Goa in September of that year, at the age of forty-seven or forty-eight. The cause is not recorded with certainty, but illness pervades the later letters — he speaks of purges, stomach remedies, and the general toll of the Indian climate on European constitutions.

He never made his dreamed journey to China, Manila, and New Spain. He never returned to the villa at Montughi, where he had promised his friends they would sit together and hear his Indian stories at leisure. He never saw his nephew Roberto grow up, or his niece Margherita settled in marriage. The pepper contract that was his livelihood had expired, Rovellasco had not renewed it, and Sassetti was contemplating departure with no clear prospects.

What survived him were his letters — carried across the ocean on the very ships he describes, preserved by the friends to whom they were addressed, and eventually gathered into the collection that Marcucci published two and a half centuries later. They were recognized as masterpieces of Italian prose almost immediately; the word *Belle!* ("Beautiful!") was found written by an unknown hand at the head of many of his autograph manuscripts. But their significance extends far beyond their literary quality. They are among the earliest and finest examples of sustained European engagement with Indian civilization — written not by a missionary or a conquistador, but by a merchant-scholar whose instinct was always to observe, to compare, to understand.

Marcucci closed his 1855 edition with the same word that unknown reader had written centuries before: *Belle!* It is difficult, having lived with these letters through the work of translation, to disagree.

Note on the text: The letters translated in this volume are numbered LXXX through CXI in Marcucci's edition, corresponding to the complete Indian correspondence. Two supplementary letters by other hands (designated LXXXIX bis and CVI bis) are included as in the original. The Discourse on Cinnamon, transmitted as an enclosure to Letter CV, is presented in its place within the sequence.

Note on Filippo Sassetti

Extracted from Notizie dell'origine e nobiltà della famiglia de' Sassetti, *compiled by Francesco di Giambatista Sassetti (1600), as printed in Marcucci's edition, §37.*

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§ 37. Filippo,[1] the other son of Giambatista, in his youth applied himself and was directed to trade by his father's will; but having reached the age of 24, and not liking that profession, he threw himself into the study of the humanities, where in a short time he made such progress that he was held in great esteem among all the men of letters. He went to the University of Pisa, where he studied philosophy with the greatest profit, and was a man universal in all the sciences; and had he remained in Florence, and continued the profession of letters, and lived the span that he naturally might have lived, in the judgment of all the learned he would have become a rare man.

But the disorder of his brother having come upon him, and an honorable opportunity presenting itself before him (with the appearance and great hope of good fortune) to return to business, he resolved to embrace it; and so in the year 1577 he transferred himself to Seville, and shortly after to Lisbon, where the profit not answering as he had promised himself, another opportunity for other business having presented itself, in the year 1581 he resolved to pass to the East Indies of Portugal; where, after many hardships of the navigation, he arrived at Goa (where the Viceroy of the Indies resides for the king of Portugal), with the charge of overseeing all the

business of the pepper that is shipped from India to Portugal: a most principal business of that trade, and such that, after the Viceroy, he was the first man of that government; so that he had the greatest opportunity to grow rich.

But, as it pleased God, he died in the year 1588, in the said place of Goa, in the month of September, in the 48th year of his age; and he was buried in the church of the Confraternity of the Misericórdia.[1] He left to his brother Francesco property worth about 12,000 florins, but through various misfortunes and accidents not a tenth part of it came into his hands. He made many other bequests and legacies,[2] both in pious works for his soul and for his own satisfaction, which exceeded the sum of 8,000 florins. He left a natural son, born a few days before his death, to whom he gave the name Ventura; who died in those parts, at the age of two.

Sassetti's Epitaph

By Orazio Neretti, his companion in India. Latin original with Italian translation by Professor Luigi Muzzi, as given in Marcucci's footnote.

> PHILIPPO SASSETTIO PATRITIO FLORENTINO A AROMATUM EXPORTANDORUM MUNERI PRAEFECTO QUI NATURALIBUS MATHEMATICISQUE DISCIPLINIS INSIGNIS GRAECA LATINA ET ETRUSCA ELOQUENTIA CLARUS NOVARUM RERUM CAUSAS INDAGANDI STUDIO POTIUS QUAM LUCRI VASTO EMENSO OCEANO AFRICA TRANSFRETATA ULTRA INDUM GOAE COMMORATUS EUROPAM PENE TOTAM LOCUPLETISSIMIS SUARUM OBSERVATIONUM THESAURIS INDORUM OPIBUS LONGE PRAESTANTIORIBUS DITAVIT HORATIUS NERETTIUS FLORENTINUS PERPETUUS GRATUSQUE COMES MULTIS CUM LACRYMIS POSUIT.
>
> *To Filippo Sassetti, Florentine patrician, appointed to the office of overseeing*

> *the export of spices, eminent in the natural and mathematical sciences, celebrated in Greek, Latin, and Tuscan eloquence, who — driven by the desire to investigate the causes of new things rather than by gain — having crossed the vast ocean, passed beyond Africa, and dwelt at Goa beyond the Indus, enriched nearly all of Europe with the most abundant treasures of his observations, far more precious than the riches of the Indies. Orazio Neretti, Florentine, his constant and grateful companion, with many tears erected this.*
>
> He died at Goa in the year 1588, aged 48.

Summary of Sassetti's Testament

From the Portuguese original, as transcribed in the Rinuccini-Magliabechiana papers and given by Marcucci in his footnote to §37.

His body to the Confraternity of the Misericórdia. To the said confraternity, 400 seraphins, with the obligation to perform each year a service of nine lessons and ordinary masses.

He freed Viviana, a Javanese slave of his, and left her 50 seraphins. Susanna of Bengal, his slave, was to serve until the age of 25 a goddaughter of his, the daughter of Signor Filippo Carasco, and then be freed. All the other slaves in his household he left free, and commended the proper settlement of the women to the wife of the said Signor Filippo Carasco, his *comare* [godmother to his child].

To a son born of Grazia of Bengal, his freedwoman (this is his own son, although the testament does not say so, and he was five months old at the time of his death), he left 1,000 seraphins; commended to Orazio Neretti, who when the child reached the age of seven was to send him to Florence to his [Sassetti's] sisters. To the said Grazia, his freedwoman, he left 200 seraphins and the nurture of the child while he remained in her hands.

To Orazio Neretti he left his gold chain and a sapphire. To Natalia, his above-mentioned goddaughter, 100 seraphins.

His mathematical instruments of brass and copper — an astronomical radius, a gilded brass planisphere, a brass astrolabe, a wooden astrolabe with wheels, a brass sphere, a celestial globe with the 48 constellations — and all his Greek and Latin books: to the Jesuit House. The two large globes with cases and fittings: to Father Gaspare Stivan of the Jesuits.

To Madonna Nera, his sister, 100 seraphins. To Madonna Maria, his sister, 150 seraphins, in addition to 500 ducats already provided to help dower her daughter.

Universal heir: Francesco Sassetti, his brother.

Executors of the testament: Lorenzo Strozzi, Fernando Gioma the German (agent of the Belzeri), and Orazio Neretti; but it was declared that if Orazio were present, the entire administration was to be his; in his absence the German was to succeed, and in the absence of both, Strozzi; and if all were absent, the Confraternity of the Misericórdia.

If the assets in China in the hands of Grifo [TN: Pietro Grifo, mentioned in the letters] could not be brought to safety, he wished that from his assets in Florence the legacy for the child be satisfied first, then that of the mother, and then the others in order as described; and the freedom of the slaves was always to be understood.

A note at the foot of the testament records that the Confraternity of the Misericórdia did not accept the legacy made to it.

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[1] Baptized in San Michele Bertoldi, Sunday the 26th of September 1540.

Table of India Letters

Letters LXXX–CXI from Lettere edite e inedite di Filippo Sassetti *(Florence: Le Monnier, 1855), with two supplementary letters by other hands.*

No.	Recipient	Place	Date	Summary
LXXX	Francesco Valori	Lisbon	22 Jan 1583	Preparations for the voyage to India; description of the fleet and departure arrangements.
LXXXI	Baccio Valori	Lisbon	22 Jan 1583	Farewell before embarking; scholarly reflections and personal matters.
LXXXII	Pier Vettori	Lisbon	22 Jan 1583	Farewell to the great humanist; scholarly observations

				on the eve of departure.
LXXXIII	Grand Duke Francesco I	At sea / Cochin	1583–84	The voyage out; first impressions of India; report to the Grand Duke.
LXXXIV	Baccio Valori	Cochin	27 Jan 1584	First letter from India; description of the voyage, arrival, and early observations of Cochin.
LXXXV	Francesco Valori	Cochin	27 Jan 1584	Personal letter on arrival; early impressions of Indian life and trade.
LXXXVI	Maria Sassetti née Bartoli	Cochin	27 Jan 1584	To his sister; news of safe arrival, domestic instructions.
LXXXVII	Cavalier Piero Spina	Cochin	20 Jan 1585	Description of pepper trade, Indian

				customs, and the monsoon.
LXXXVIII	Giambatista Strozzi	Cochin	20 Jan 1585	Description of monsoon seasons, Indian climate, and natural phenomena.
LXXXIX	Francesco Valori	Cochin	20 Jan 1585	Personal news; reflections on life in India and commercial affairs.
LXXXIX bis	Giovanni Buondelmonti to Baccio Valori	Cochin	20 Jan 1585	*Supplementary letter.* Buondelmonti describes Indian customs, betel chewing, clothing, and diet.
XC	Maria Sassetti née Bartoli	Cochin	22 Jan 1585	Family matters; advice on property and nephew Roberto's career.

XCI	Baccio Valori	Cochin	22 Jan 1585	Scholarly observations on India; natural history; the pepper trade.
XCII	Lorenzo Canigiani	Cochin	10 Feb 1585	Major ethnographic letter: Indian dress, food, housing, customs, religion, betel.
XCIII	Grand Duke Francesco I	Cochin	11 Feb 1585	Formal report: spice trade, political situation, natural history specimens.
XCIV	Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici	Cochin	11 Feb 1585	Report on Indian affairs; customs of the Gentiles and Moors.
XCV	Michele Saladini	Cochin	11 Feb 1585	Personal letter with commercial news and Indian observations.

XCVI	Lorenzo Canigiani	Cochin	Feb 1585	Continuation of ethnographic descriptions: Indian society, trade, customs.
XCVII	Pier Vettori	Cochin	27 Jan 1585	The famous letter with observations on Sanskrit–European linguistic parallels.
XCVIII	Alessandro Rinuccini	Cochin	Jan 1585	Literary reflections and news from India.
XCIX	Maria Sassetti née Bartoli	Cochin	22 Jan 1586	Family business; health; news of relatives.
C	Francesco Valori	Goa / Cochin	9 Nov 1585 – 22 Jan 1586	Grand survey of the Indian Ocean trade: pepper, monsoon shipping calendar, pearl fishery, diamonds,

				currencies. Cinnamon water and stomach medicine.
CI	Lorenzo Canigiani	Cochin	23 Jan 1586	Buondelmonti's return; bezoar and porcupine stones; the disease *mordaxi* and its cure; two dramatic anecdotes.
CII	Alessandro Rinuccini	Cochin	1 Jan – 6 Feb 1586	Critique of Castiglione's *Cortegiano*; Indian merchants, caste system, money-changers (*xaraffi*), finger-bargaining, augury practices.
CIII	Grand Duke Francesco I	Goa / Cochin	23 Jan – 6 Feb 1586	Visit to the Zamorin of Calicut; his

				palace and person. Portuguese–Zamorin–Cochin politics. The *Amocchi* warrior system. Britti's pirate adventure. Botanical specimens and the *Nighaṇṭu*. Chinese silk pavilion. Ternate affair.
CIV	Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici	Cochin	10 Feb 1586	Request for a Spanish passport to travel from India via Malacca, Moluccas, China, Manila, and New Spain — a 7–8 year circumnavigation.
CV	Baccio Valori	Cochin	6 Jan 1587	Cover letter

				for the Discourse on Cinnamon; death of Piero Vettori; plans to visit China; Japanese embassy; ancient inscriptions in India.
—	*Discourse on Cinnamon*	[enclosed with CV]	[1587]	Formal treatise: Is Ceylon cinnamon the *cinnamomum* of the ancients? Systematic comparison of classical sources with firsthand botanical observation.
CVI	Maria Sassetti née Bartoli	Cochin	6 Jan 1587	Family advice; nephew Roberto's career; Girolamo;

				nuns and relatives.
CVI bis	Giambatista Vecchietti to Bernardo Vecchietti	Hormuz	2 Jul 1587	*Supplementary letter.* Escape from Persia amid civil war; arrival at Hormuz ill and penniless but with Oriental manuscripts; heading to Goa to lodge with Sassetti.
CVII	Maria Sassetti née Bartoli	Cochin	11 Dec 1587	Advice against marrying niece Margherita to a 57-year-old man; family finances; stoic reflections.
CVIII	Baccio Valori	Cochin	11 Jan 1588	Chinese writing system; skepticism about Chinese marvels; corrections to the cinnamon discourse;

				Vecchietti's departure.
CIX	Lorenzo Giacomini	Cochin	17 Jan 1588	Effects of the magnetic lodestone; celestial influences; Indian plants with strange powers; Giorgio Bartoli's posthumous book.
CX	Bernardo Davanzati	Cochin	[Jan 1588]	The *Cadirà* tree and *Catù* (catechu): preparation, properties, medical uses. The *Nighaṇṭu* text. **The Sanskrit passage**: the language called *Sanscruma*, cognate numerals and words.

			Brahmins' amazement.
CXI	N.N. [possibly [Cochin] Bonciani]	[1586?]	João de Barros and Maffei as historians; Malabar geography; skin color and race; Gujarat, Hormuz, Malacca, China; pepper caravans overland to Tartary; Britti and Vecchietti.

Summary of correspondents in the India letters:

Recipient	Letters	Character of correspondence
Francesco Valori	3 (LXXXV, LXXXIX, C)	Close friend; personal news, commercial intelligence, the great trade survey
Baccio Valori	4 (LXXXIV, XCI, CV, CVIII)	Scholarly friend; natural history, linguistics, the cinnamon discourse
Maria Sassetti née	4 (LXXXVI, XC, XCIX,	Sister; family business,

Bartoli	CVI, CVII)	domestic advice, niece's marriage
Lorenzo Canigiani	3 (XCII, XCVI, CI)	Longest ethnographic descriptions; Indian customs, bezoar stones, *mordaxi*
Grand Duke Francesco I	2 (LXXXIII, XCIII, CIII)	Formal diplomatic reports; natural history, politics, specimens
Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici	2 (XCIV, CIV)	Indian affairs; the circumnavigation proposal
Pier Vettori	1 (XCVII)	The Sanskrit–European linguistic observation
Alessandro Rinuccini	2 (XCVIII, CII)	Literary criticism; Indian merchants and finger-bargaining
Giambatista Strozzi	1 (LXXXVIII)	The monsoon description
Cavalier Piero Spina	1 (LXXXVII)	Pepper trade and Indian customs
Michele Saladini	1 (XCV)	Commercial news
Lorenzo Giacomini	1 (CIX)	Magnetism and the lodestone
Bernardo Davanzati	1 (CX)	Catechu and the Sanskrit passage
N.N.	1 (CXI)	General survey of the Estado da India
Supplementary: Buondelmonti	1 (LXXXIX bis)	Indian customs (betel, clothing, diet)

Supplementary: Vecchietti	1 (CVI bis)	Persian civil war; journey to Goa

PREFACE

By Ettore Marcucci (1855)

What Giusti wrote of a proverb that seemed made expressly to knock down the charlatanry of title pages would apply equally well to prefaces, when they are not by the author himself but by the editor, or the annotator, or any one of those who act like the prologues of ancient comedies, and practically drive out the text by their insistent hammering. In the letters of Sassetti one would have a very wide field to traverse, illuminated as they are by knowledge of politics, of trade, of navigation, and of as many natural speculations as eminently adorned his mind. But I, who am in the dark about such studies and would not wish to find myself in danger of overreaching, take hold of a more modest office; and if I cannot achieve the desired brevity, the fault will be more the subject's than my own.

Of three things I believe myself strictly obliged to inform the reader; and these are: first, some account of the person of the author; second, whence and how the idea arose of publishing this collection of letters; third, what and how much care I have spent upon it.

The Life of Filippo Sassetti is to be found in no book — not even (which is remarkable) in the *Biographie universelle*. This omission, rather than being attributed to scant merit on the part of the sixteenth-century Florentine, must be imputed to the great ingratitude of posterity: so that his name lies almost forgotten in Tuscany, and is perhaps universally unknown in the rest of Italy. It used to be said in olden times that virtue was abhorred while

alive and raised to heaven after death. We do worse: while alive, we persecute it; once dead, we never speak of it again. Sassetti's century may have had its vices, but they were excused by the virtues that we lack; and since these are usually even more esteemed in the times that most readily produce them, that stupendous intellect could not fail to win the admiration of his most learned contemporaries, who set great store by his writings, and from his youth regarded him as a dear friend and a revered master. His too-early death was mourned no less in his homeland than in the India where it occurred. Most affectionate verses were written by Giambatista Strozzi, Ottavio Rinuccini, and Giuseppe Nozzolini; the funeral eulogy by Luigi Alamanni the Younger and Giambatista Vecchietti — the former delivering his at the Academy of the Alterati (and it is printed in Volume IV, Part I, of the *Prose Fiorentine*), the latter at the Florentine Academy (and it is not only unpublished, but perhaps lost).

Sassetti was so loved and venerated even among barbarous nations that, as his eulogist reports, "certain pirates plundering a Portuguese ship asked whether there were aboard any property of Filippo Sassetti; and seeing that there was, they released it, and ordered that it be restored to him — as it was — saying that they bore upon their heads the honor and reverence of his name." Other notices of his studies and his fame are scattered through the records of our literary history: yet a work that would embrace the entire course of his life, and show us not only the man of letters but the man, was as much to be desired as it is to be lamented that no one thought to compose it.

The reason was easily the very little of note that his civic life offers, spent until nearly his twenty-fifth year in the occupations of trade; then for seven and more years in the incessant application to studies in Pisa; then in accumulating the great treasure of varied learning, and clothing in choice forms the lofty ideas of his mind, between the solitude of his study, the

gatherings of the Academy, and the conversation of friends — among whom it will suffice to name Pier Vettori, Vincenzio Borghini, Scipione Ammirato, Lorenzo Giacomini, Bernardo Davanzati, Francesco Bonciani, Marcellino Adriani, the Valori, the Rinuccini, the Strozzi: until, forced by domestic necessities to "re-merchantize" himself again (to use his own word), he left Florence and Italy at the age of thirty-eight; and in the ten years he survived, he partly wandered between Spain and Portugal, partly in the East Indies.

He was one of those men whom nature produces from time to time, and then breaks the mold: all heart, all study. Born of a most ancient and noble family, if he could not rid himself of certain aristocratic conceits, he knew how heroically to bear the reverses of fortune, and to accommodate himself to straitened circumstances — more mindful of his family than of himself. In the eulogy he wrote of Tommaso Del Nero, saying that one could well imagine how he would have turned out had the occasion of defending his country called him to the art of war — to which, however, it was not fitting that he should give himself, being born, raised, and bred in the civil condition — he gave cause to believe that whoever is noble or of civil station should not be required to bear arms, as though he demeaned himself rather than ennobled himself by using them for so holy an end. But in the *Life* of that true martyr of Florentine liberty, Francesco Ferrucci, Filippo showed all the feeling of an Italian soul informed by the vigorous virtues of the happiest times of the republic. Yet in other cases he might appear — I know not whether to say too Florentine or too little Italian: the wretched condition of the whole people of Italy, which, scattered and made alien to itself, must lose even the awareness of the national spirit.

For a man so accustomed to conversing with foreigners, the company of foreigners is difficult; just as it is his view that "malcontents always open the way for foreign powers." In seeing him therefore on such familiar terms

with the Medici, by whom his family had always been advanced, one must not suppose him a courtier to the tyrants of his homeland, or resembling that slave imagined by Elphinstone, who, content with his chain, lies upon it and sleepily dozes. The times make the man; and Sassetti was the man of his time, if not what he might have been and perhaps wished to be.

His letters are the mirror of his life, which, almost as on a votive tablet — as Horace said of old Lucilius — is represented there. For the rest, I shall not cull the praises delivered by Alamanni, nor the various other particulars recently collected by the worthy Filippo-Luigi Polidori, who thought to do what had not been done in more than two and a half centuries by those who had the greater obligation and opportunity. In publishing in Volume IV, Part II, of the *Archivio Storico Italiano* the *Life of Ferrucci* written by Sassetti, he took the occasion to write that of the author. From his well-known expertise and indefatigability, one may judge of the accuracy of the work, the acuity of the judgment, the wealth of information. But since these are, besides being voluminous, drawn for the most part from Sassetti's own letters — to the point of reproducing his very words at length — they could not find a place, as I would have wished, in a book that contains those letters, where anyone who reads can likewise come to know every particular of the writer's life.

Moreover, in undertaking every possible research upon that life, I came upon a codex containing the history of the origin and antiquity of the Sassetti family, compiled by Filippo's brother. Through the kindness of Signor Francesco Cambiagi, owner of the codex, I was allowed to take a copy; and I adorn the present edition with it all the more gladly, in that the new text is some addition to my small stock, and has the fine distinction that some of its parts were assembled with great labor and industry by Filippo himself. Of whom a notice is given in paragraph 37; and if the information that the compiler provides about him is not very ample, we are

more than compensated by much other news of the family, which for its novelty will serve the history of noble Florentine houses. Having nothing to add on this matter, I close this first part with a bibliographical summary, though I am not certain of having found all of Sassetti's unpublished writings; for there should be many more, if it is true that among other things he wrote in verse and composed tragedies. In any case, together with the published ones, they are a sufficient number for another volume, and all so full of wisdom and elegance that their speedy publication is to be hoped for.

Published Writings

Life of Francesco Ferrucci. Published in Volume IV, Part II, of the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, pp. 467–535, with a preliminary discourse by C. Monzani and annotations by the same and by L. Passerini. The autograph is in the Biblioteca Riccardiana, folio codex, no. 1539.

Eulogy of Lelio Torelli. Printed in the *Fasti consolari dell'Accademia Fiorentina* of Salvino Salvini, pp. 130–142. Various apograph copies are to be found in our libraries.

Lecture on Imprese. Published in Volume II, Part II, of the *Prose Fiorentine*, pp. 151–196, Florence edition of Tartini and Franchi, 1716–1746; and repeated in the later Venice editions of Occhi and Remondini. The autograph is in the Magliabechiana, Cod. 454, Class XXVI; and a good apograph in Cod. 6 of the said class: whence it would be easy to remedy, as Polidori observed, the not few errors and lacunae of the printed edition.

Address to the Academy of the Alterati, in Praise of Federigo Strozzi, Called the Agghiadato, New Academician. Printed in the *Fasti consolari*

of Salvino Salvini, pp. 239–240. The autograph is in Cod. 125, Class IX, of the Magliabechiana.

Discourse on Commerce between the Tuscans and the Levantines, with the Dedicatory Letter to Cavaliere Francesco Bongianni Gianfigliazzi. Printed in the Appendix of the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Volume IX, pp. 171–184. Our edition, p. 101; see the note there.

Letters (54), Written from Spain, Portugal, and India. Published in Volume III, Part IV, of the *Prose Fiorentine*, pp. 1–236, and in later editions. Nine of these letters were included by Luigi Carrer in the *Relazioni di Viaggiatori*, Volume II, Venice, 1841. All in a single volume edited by Prospero Viani, Reggio, Tipografia Torreggiani e C., 1844. For our edition, see the Index and the notes appended to nearly every letter, where account is given of the manuscripts and the corrections and additions made.

Unpublished Writings

Second Lecture on Imprese. Two equally autograph copies, with differences of no great importance, are in Codex 2435 of the Biblioteca Riccardiana.

Replies to the Propositions of Castravilla, Who Had Written against Dante; Followed by Fragments of Another Reply to the Same Castravilla in the Form of a Discourse. Autograph, in the Magliabechiana, Cod. 125, Class IX.

Discourse on the Comedy of Dante. Autograph, in the Magliabechiana, Cod. 1028, Class VII.

Poetics of Aristotle Translated and Commented in Tuscan. The

beginning of a vernacular translation of the work of the Stagirite, in which each section is followed by a not brief commentary by the translator. Autograph, in careful handwriting, in the Riccardiana, from folio 81 to 126 of Codex 1539.

Funeral Oration on the Death of Tommaso Del Nero, Delivered at the Academy of the Alterati. Autograph, in the Riccardiana, Cod. 2237.

Discourse of the Alterati Academicians on the Annotations to the Poetics of Messer Alessandro Piccolomini. A kind of academic report, made by order of Signora Eleonora di Toledo de' Medici, of which Sassetti was the sole or principal compiler; as the autograph, found in Cod. 2435 of the Riccardiana, would show. A copy is also in the Magliabechiana, Cod. 125, Class IX.

Critique of the Orlando Furioso of Lodovico Ariosto. Autograph in Cod. 125, Class IX, of the Magliabechiana.

Discourse Delivered on Taking the Governance of the Academy of the Alterati. Autograph in Cod. 2435 of the Riccardiana.

Various Fragments (and autographs): Two different openings of the *Life of Ferrucci*, which differ somewhat from the third, preferred by the editors of that Life (Riccardiana, Cod. 1539). Notes and information gathered for writing the said Life (Magliabechiana, Cod. 123, Class IX). Notes for writing on the figure of Allegory (Magliabechiana, Cod. 125, Class IX). A fragment, twice written and with slight differences, on the life of Sejanus (ibid., Cod. 123, Class IX). Various maxims (ibid.).

Passing now to the idea of gathering these letters into a single body, I must

first render credit to the above-praised Polidori, who, by discovering very many of them, gave us hope that more might be discovered, and that those already in print might be brought to a correct reading by comparison with the autographs. The very keen desire I have to see Italian writings always flourishing in fine style and good language made me fix my mind all the more upon Sassetti's letters, which seemed to me a case in which the brightness of our native idiom could certainly be increased. Before the editors of the *Prose Fiorentine* undertook to publish thirty-four of them in Volume IV, Part III, of that collection, the canon Lorenzo Panciatichi had attempted to do so — he, whose very fine judgment must have been sorely grieved by the neglect in which they lay. And if those few, then found, prove so dear a pasture for whoever comes to read them, I imagined what usefulness and delight would be gathered from a number twice as great.

What greatly encouraged me to bring my plan to completion was the ability to make the necessary corrections to the Florentine edition, so spoiled and so full of lacunae and modernized dictions: so that in place of the just complaint that has been raised by all until now, there should come an equal measure of wonder or indignation at seeing that sometimes scarcely a trace or footprint remained of what the author wrote. The later editions, in this respect, had no improvement of any kind; much less those excerpted in collections of Travels, where it is nevertheless praiseworthy that someone remembered Sassetti, while no one ever thought of his letters in those many epistolary collections for the use of young people. And truly, leaving aside the narrative and descriptive ones, I know few among the so-called consolatory letters of more affectionate eloquence than that to Francesco Valori on the death of his brother Paolantonio.

Considering moreover these letters in the color they possess and the quality of the subjects treated, it seemed to me that this could be a book to pass easily through the hands of every sort of person. For Sassetti is of the

purest speech and a master of expression, copious, vivid, and often so admirable an artificer of new forms and words that he alone furnishes an immense supply to the patrimony of the language. I do not know, indeed, how far my judgment might be faulted in saying that he unites in himself the merits of several of the most praised writers, such as the grace of Firenzuola, the sinew of Davanzati, the spirited carelessness of Cellini, the omnipotence of Bartoli.

As to the substance of his discourse, one may attest that in learning he surpasses whoever was most reputed as wise; so that it is not at all to be held an exaggeration of brotherly love to say that "he was a man universal in all the sciences; and had he remained in Florence, and continued the profession of letters, and lived the span he naturally might have lived, in the judgment of all the learned he would have become a rare man." His letters written in his homeland may perhaps have a lesser attraction than the others, on account of that prevailing humor of subtilizing in a philosophy that Monti would call bankrupt. But what a capital of useful observations in those he wrote from Spain, and particularly from the East Indies, whose records he was among the first to collect and transmit to us! Exact accounts of the customs of strange peoples; descriptions of places and things most curious — besides touching masterfully with a rapid and sure hand upon a bit of everything: economics, botany, geology, medicine, astronomy, the course of the winds, the declination of the magnetic needle, the ebb and flow of the sea, and similar phenomena. And if in our times his reasonings about physical matters should seem of slight account, they always deserve to be studied as historical monuments of human knowledge; all the more so in that in several speculations he cannot be denied the distinction of having hit the mark, and of having almost shown himself a precursor of Galileo. To any modern boasting, Sassetti's answer would be the words of Boursault: *Sans tout qui sais si peu, vous seriez moins encore* [Without all

that I who know so little [discovered], you would know even less]. To which Galileo himself fittingly adds: “Many pride themselves on having many authorities to confirm their opinions; and I would rather have been the first to find them.”

Now, as many as are the kinds of subjects that Sassetti discusses in his letters, so many are the orders of persons who will want to seek them out, not excluding those who practice trade, who may have a model, not so easy to find, for their correspondence, and may learn the old customs of commerce.

Another consideration weighed greatly in the idea that came to me of collecting these letters. They recount travels. Doubly useful, I said, such a book; indeed, for anyone who wishes to advance in the study of human nature, even more useful than histories themselves. And lest it be thought that I pronounce such a truth of my own mind, I am pleased to support it with the testimony of a worthy man. “The accounts of travelers” (says Bianchetti in Discourse V of *Lo Scrittore Italiano*) “lead us into the interior of a nation’s families, make us observe a quantity of private and public things, the greater number of which may seem of little importance considered separately; but which, brought together, give us that more exact idea of such a people that could not be had from elsewhere, and that certainly could never come to us from kings, or from captains, or from wars, or from revolutions, which are the perpetual subject of historians: by which they represent to us only the smallest part of a people; and this part itself they show us only very inaccurately, because in a state of agitation.”

Beyond which, one finds precisely in Sassetti’s letters, as I noted above and as Pascal wished, not the author, but the man. You would say that they cost him no more effort to think than time to write; and it almost seems as if you see him in the very act of the departure of Portuguese ships, to which he

had to deliver them, filling the pages with those scrawls and curlicues of his that have driven me to such despair. Woe when the office of the heart is usurped by the intellect!

I have now gone on at great length; and to complete my account, I come to the manner I have followed in the present edition. My first care has been the arrangement of these letters in chronological order, as the most fitting way to represent the progress of the writer's mind and the various events of his life; the careful observance of the original manuscripts for the unpublished ones, and the collation of the published ones, except for the six to his sister Maria and Letter LXXXIX to Francesco Valori, which I was unable to track down in any codex. The few times I found myself with texts not in the author's hand, I governed myself in the manner that will be described in the account I shall give of my little notes.

I have kept in everything to the autographs, preserving even certain antiquated verb endings that serve the historical knowledge of the language, without however maintaining the spelling of certain other words that, by being altered, were not made to change in sound. I have left not only the *et* before words beginning with a vowel — where Bartoli believes it is permissible to use it, if it sounds well to the ear — but also the not always uniform manner of writing certain words that with the same meaning and without fault can be represented differently: and in the uncertainty of the apographs, I have followed the laws of pronunciation, of which writing is believed to be the image from life. For punctuation I have followed current usage; and so in the very long pages written at a single stretch, as the ancients were accustomed to do and moderns can ill bear, I have divided the variety of subject matter into paragraphs.

The name of persons to whom several consecutive letters are addressed I have repeated in each, so as not to oblige the reader to search for it further

back, while not failing in all of them to repeat the customary formula of title and subscription, so that the usages of that time in this accessory part, which might be called convention, may be seen. To each letter I have prefixed a summary: my own for the unpublished ones, and formed, for nearly all of the thirty-four already published, from what the first Florentine editors discussed about each in their preface.

The manuscripts from which they were drawn or collated belong to the Medici Archive, the Magliabechiana Library, the Riccardiana, the former Rinuccini collection (whose manuscripts are now in the said Magliabechiana), in addition to a codex from the Capponi library and another from the above-mentioned Signor Cambiagi: and all, severally, with their identifying numbers when they have them, and whether autographs or apographs, are always indicated in the notes.

Of the purpose and intent of my notes, it is proper that I give some account. I say I have appended them only to those places where they were strictly necessary, for greater light upon tangled constructions, obscure or foreign words, and historical references; to mark the new additions, or rather the old deletions; and for so many other observations, more to the point where they stand than necessary to mention here. Once things have been noted, I do not return to them, or I refer back to the first note; and what belongs to the lexicographical glossary I ordinarily pass over. If grammatical observations or similar trifles have fallen from my pen, they are intended for readers little or not at all versed in these studies, or for certain persons who pretend to measure fine style with the compasses of grammar, and to know perfectly the properties of a language by reducing it, from the spoken thing it is (as the eminent Niccolini observes), to the condition of being merely written, or — what is the same — dead.

In general, my little notes have no other office than to indicate the variants

of the texts for the correction of the already-published letters; with this order, however: that if these are collated with the autographs, I show at the foot of the page the error of the printed edition; if with apographs, I give the correction in the text only when the preferred reading seems more reasonable, or more resembling the author's manner, or confirmed by more than one codex, without this meaning that the others are proscribed: and when the printed edition is taken as the guide, the variants are always given in the notes, except when they are utterly trivial.

I have noted my doubts in some passages of letters that are even unpublished and autograph, nor have I been ashamed here and there to confess expressly that I do not understand, rather than touch anything by guesswork and act against what Borghini so insisted upon: that one must proceed cautiously in doubtful matters, and it is a much lesser error to leave a passage uncorrected in an author than to patch it up so that it seems right. Wherefore without any scruple I have left some things blank, where the form of Sassetti's handwriting — always somewhat rough by nature — was more inextricably tangled, or had escaped sight because the page was torn or the ink faded; although I did not fail to try the test of others' eyes and judgment: for which I am particularly grateful to the kind friendship of the above-praised Polidori, who undertook to bear with me in good part the tedious labor of reviewing the codices.

If, in the end, my little notes appear thin and washed out, they will be sufficiently excused by the poverty of my powers, and by their being composed as I went along, amid the continual annoyance of having to rearrange the order of my work repeatedly as new letters of Sassetti came gradually to light — often by chance and good fortune — in codices where there appeared no sign of finding them, for want of proper catalogues: which was the chief cause of the delay of this edition.

Of my adding a discourse by our author on commerce between the Tuscans and the Levantines, and two letters by Francesco Valori and Giambatista Vecchietti, in addition to that already published by Bondelmonti, notice is given in their proper places; and I conclude the account of my cares with a Glossary of Words and Expressions, and a Table of the Most Notable Things. The treasures of language scattered through all one hundred and eleven letters would sooner or later have been gathered into that treasury which alone remains immune from foreign plundering; and so that they might be immediately noticed, I have drawn out the best for open display. I do protest, however, that I have not observed the strict rules of lexicography, drawing out phrases either in full or under the nouns that accommodate various combinations of verbs and adverbial expressions. Not all the explanations will hold up to the hammer, since most of the time it is a matter of guessing the unknown and the ambiguous: some that refer to the *Discourse on Commerce*, published in the *Archivio Storico*, were made by the worthy Polidori; some are from the Crusca dictionary, some furnished by the valued works of the great Gherardini and the most able Abbot Manuzzi.

With the same good intention that I had in correcting others' errors, let others correct mine — never committed with a master's assurance, but with a pupil's timidity; and let those who know supply the not few and not unknown to me imperfections of this Glossary, adding several words and expressions, especially those proper to science and trade, which to plunge into all of them would have been to go into infinity; and discarding several others that could perhaps have been left out as being outside common use — even though I think it necessary to know them, so that moderns, reading the ancients, may understand them, not that in writing they should employ them.

All those I have chosen are not registered in the fourth printing of the great

Vocabolario della Crusca, or are found there without the proper examples, or with only ancient ones, or only from poets, or from more recent writers. And if the burlesque poets should by some be regarded as prose writers on account of the simple and almost prosaic style they adopted, they did not seem so to me, since they may very often have used this or that phrase not so much from the naturalness of speech as from the necessity of the verse or the rhyme. I have included some noted even by the latest lexicographers who worked through the *Prose Fiorentine*: but I do not believe they are there for nothing, since the old printed text remains of almost no validity after so many changes and corrections — to say nothing of the absurdity of admitting into a dictionary things from another world, as happened with *Sozzoso* added to *Vento*, which the autograph reads in clear letters *Forzoso*.

Of the same word or expression I have given more or fewer examples, as occasion served; and among my observations, not a few examples from other writers for comparison or confirmation of those of our author.

These have been my cares. Some might be called the indulgent caresses of a book, or, as Foscolo said, necessary minutiae — if indeed someone did not think them most important conveniences. And here, recapitulating the merits of Filippo Sassetti, both for the grace of his writing and for the breadth of his knowledge, whoever is warmed by the Italian sun cannot but hold in affection and the highest esteem an intellect of such excellence, and nourish his studies on all that that marvelous man dictated. If in human society correspondence by letter is of supreme need — because, separated by place, we assist each other with goods, and fraternally bind ourselves together with information useful to the mind and to life — the examples of Sassetti are such that they show us how this office may be fulfilled with certain hope of making ourselves profitable and pleasing to all. For in speaking of the most varied things, in each of them he offers us the way to express ideas with grace, clarity, and propriety of speech, and to adorn the

discourse with solid and not tiresome learning. Those eager to form themselves in fine civility of living and nobility of studies must make this book their delight — a book that commends itself powerfully on its own account, without further suffrage of words, to the mind and heart of all who love our country's literature.

Florence, October 1855.

Ettore Marcucci

And from India, in due time, I shall give both Your Highness and His Most Illustrious Lordship a particular account and report of the voyage, as well as of that land and of every other thing that shall seem to me worthy of coming to their knowledge. May Our Lord pro-

> [1] *Balconevisi*. Formerly *Valconevisi*; a hamlet that was once a fortified settlement in the lower Valdarno.
>
> [2] *p*.... To avoid confusion, I have given only the initial letter of the *pincio* or *pinziero* [?], as this word appears to be written.
>
> [3] Autograph in the Medicean Archive, *filza* 100, fol. 290.

[p. 236] -sper Your Highness together with your most happy state, and may He preserve it for a long time. From Lisbon, the 7th of February 1583.

Your Most Serene Highness's

Most devoted vassal and servant.

LXXVIII. To Francesco Valori, in Florence. Unpublished.[1]

He returns to jesting about the lost cheese, and similar matters already discussed.

Most Magnificent Sir, my most honored,

I used to hear it said at home when I was little that cheese wore out the shoes of whoever ate it; then, having grown a little older, they said it thickened the brain and greatly impeded the learning of arithmetic. In particular, I do not know whether it also had this other virtue of preventing people from going to India; for, if that were the case, I would not complain that last year's cheese was lost; and indeed I would not buy any here, where there is good cheese to be had, but not like the one that went to drink [TN: i.e., was lost at sea]. Praised be the Lord for everything, for it would have been well if that were the least of the misfortunes that occurred. That captain was ransomed and is here, but he does not acknowledge the bill of lading; so that having it serves no purpose. The other ship you mention — yes, it came back, as far as existing goes, as P. used to say, but it did not bring back any of your money; why? Because it was never loaded aboard. It sailed at the same time as we did, but it was bound for Malacca, which is beyond India by more miles than *bella cacheremo*;[2] and as for the matter of you others sending or not sending, I shall gladly leave the thinking, as the saying goes, to *Stoldo*.[3] I can well see that it is

[1] Autograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana.

[2] *More miles than "bella cacheremo."* He wished to imitate Boccaccio, who in Novella 28 [TN: *Decameron* III.8], to say infinite miles, uses this scatological proverbial expression in the person of that wicked Bolognese monk who was

describing this world to Ferondo, who already believed himself dead and in the afterlife.

[3] *Stoldo*. This could be a proper name. We would say "to leave one's cares at the door."

[p. 237] a matter of setting one's course very far off, and that from here the preparations for wars and other affairs are being made, and that one could easily fall among evil spirits. A pox on whichever of you or me is more afraid. And as for writing at length without other occasion, I commend myself to Your Lordship, for there will be enough people to give account to: mercy,[1] if everyone were to do as you do! Oh, what a fine occasion for philosophizing there would be! Will it not suffice you: "We have arrived safely by the grace of God, we are all well, and so we hope to hear of you"? Meanwhile, since the courier allows no time, we shall not be longer, reserving ourselves to make up for it with the next. I do believe the Signor Dottore[2] is mistaken in saying he has some aloeswood, because of the wood from the rosary that I sent him he has certainly never so much as sniffed it; nor have you either — besides which, his notice, which I understood perfectly well, did not come in time, for I had already purchased it. Do not deprive your nose, even once, of that scent, which — I'll stake my own — will surely comfort you if nothing else does. The porcelain pieces that you then requested on his behalf, I did not procure them, because nothing was left, nor was there then anything worth having; and, as you know, with him ordinary things have no place, at least given my desire to satisfy him. From India, God willing, I shall make it up to him. I have a letter from the Most Presumptuous One,[3] but I do not think I shall answer him for now, as I have nothing to say to him, and letters full of ceremony kill me,[4] all the more so since that sonnet of his on the death of F. Strozzi did not please me — which you may tell him when he is there. That Bonciani fellow has someone write me every mail that he writes, and I

never see any letters at all — and it does not matter: I expect this one will find him there. Tell him that I am entirely at his service, just as I am at your command. God, etc. From Lisbon, the 5th of March 1583. The departure will be at the end of this month.

[1] *Mercy* [*Chè misericordia*]. An elliptical expression used as an exclamation.

[2] *Signor Dottore*. Baccio Valori, doctor of laws, and not only (writes Ammirato) very learned in the studies called humane, but also very accomplished in philosophy and Greek letters.

[3] *The Most Presumptuous One* [*Dalle presuntuosissime*]. It was noted in note 5, p. 188, and note 2, p. 218, that this nickname alluded to Giambattista Strozzi; and what is then said about his sonnet on the death of F. Strozzi makes this clear — that is, as Sassetti says at p. 232, in praise of his kinsman, Filippo di Piero Strozzi, for whom he did not think one should waste paper.

[4] *Kill me* [*Mi cavano il cuore*]. As if to say: they are the death of me.

[p. 238]

LXXIX. To Baccio Valori, in Florence. Published.[1]

He replies to a question of his concerning the text of Pier Crescenzi [TN: Pietro de' Crescenzi, author of the medieval agricultural treatise Ruralia commoda*], which he had left him as a gift before departing from Florence. He continues to inform him about the quality and scent of calambac [TN: a high-grade aloeswood], and to note the difference between it and ordinary aloeswood. He discusses certain alphabets of Oriental languages, Egyptian hieroglyphics, the kingdom of Pegu [TN: in modern Myanmar], the black women of the island of San Lorenzo [TN: Madagascar]; and reports an observation on a passage in Ptolemy. He says furthermore that he will have cinnamon water and porcelain sent to him; and closes with affectionate words for messer Piero Vettori.*

Most Illustrious and Excellent Sir, my most honored,

The answer[2] that Your Lordship requests from me regarding what you write about the text of Piero Crescenzio obliges me to trouble you with this letter of mine before I depart for India. Your Lordship did me the favor, upon my departure from there, of accepting from me as a gift that book, whatever it may have been: so that, if afterward it had come into my mind to make of it one thing rather than another, it was I who ought to have asked your permission. I am sorry that the text was not as correct[3] as I would have wished; but the less perfect it is, the greater the obligation its author will have to Your Lordship, who will need to undertake greater labor so that it be[4] such as is fitting. Had you wished[5] for perfumed gloves from here, there was no opportunity at present to send them: for the rest, they make them here as fine as anyone could wish, just as they do there, though at greater expense.

[1] Collated and augmented with the autograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana.

[2] *The answer, etc.* Up to where he begins to speak of calambac, the text is unpublished.

[3] *I am sorry that the text was not correct*. But Valori must have had another, better copy of his own, and will have used Sassetti's for comparison, since, according to Salviati (*Avvertimenti*, 21, 2), it seems that at that time no other copy of Crescenzio was known so correct or so complete as the one now held by messer Baccio Valori: and it was written as early as the year 1445 by a man from San Gimignano, and ser Lorenzo de' Benvenuti is named at the end of that book.

[4] A word is missing because the sheet is torn. One may suppose *ridotto* [brought to the state], or the like.

[5] *Had you wished* [*Avesse voluto*]. A defective construction, the complete form of which would be: *If Your Lordship*, or *Whoever had wished*, etc.

[p. 239] The scent of calambac is not only not harmful, but is very pleasant, and is particularly good for the comfort of the head, even without burning it, as I hope you will have discovered and will have been satisfied. This is different from aloeswood, which here they call *palo d'aguila* [TN: Portuguese *pau d'águila*, "eaglewood"], according to its degree of quality: for calambac is fresh and holds[1] much oil, so much so that those black kings extract it and prize it excessively, as it deserves. Aloeswood is drier, and at the cut of a knife one knows it immediately, for if you take a little shaving from it, to the touch it is found dry and parched; whereas the other retains the finger stuck to it. Of their origins I know nothing, nor do I know who could give an account of them. It comes floating down that great river that empties into the Bay of Bengal, which today is called the Ganga. The Portuguese believe it to be the Ganges, but Gerard Mercator, the great cosmographer of these times, seeking to preserve Ptolemy, makes the Ganges the first river of China, called Cantan [TN: i.e., the Pearl River at

Canton/Guangzhou]. But this is not relevant now. The Portuguese say that in India there is no one who knows, or who, having searched, has found the sources of that river Ganga; and therefore they think it comes from the earthly Paradise; and since that aloeswood comes down the said river, and no one knows from where, they have it originating in the same place: such are their arguments.

I have received the alphabets that Your Lordship sent me, and it could be that the Jesuit Fathers who are in India might recognize them, being engaged in learning those languages for the service of preaching. And as for the hieroglyphics, of which Your Lordship writes to me, it seems to me that I already wrote to Your Lordship how this writing by symbols was customary throughout China and Japan, and all those neighboring lands, where the written form is common but the languages are more different from one another than Tuscan is from German. A Father who went to those parts, having learned the language, wished to learn to write. The master did not encourage him, and, asked the reason, replied that the characters were as many as the things and the concepts, and therefore, as an infinite matter, he advised him to give it up. I remember having read much and inquired much about how the Egyptians managed to write, as we would say, a letter or a history at length with all the parts of speech, using those hieroglyphics: but it was never possible for me to learn anything about it.

> [1] *Holds* [*Tiene*]. The printed edition has *contiene* [contains].

[p. 240] Last year in Madrid I found a Ptolemy with commentary or annotations by one Michele Villanova [TN: Michael Servetus, who published an annotated edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia*], who in a commentary he makes on the second map of Africa, says among other things: *Primo Deorum cultum apud eos institutum memorant* (this map contains Ethiopia), *primasque sacrorum ceremonias. Duplicem literarum*

usum, ut, quae sacrae dicerentur, Sacerdotibus dumtaxat notae essent, alterum earum quae vulgo paterent. Fuerunt tamen literarum figurae haud tales, ut ex illis syllabae coalescerent, sed animantibus, extremisque hominum partibus, variisque instrumentis artificum perquam similes, singulisque sua inerat figuris significatio; ut in accipitre celeritas, in crocodilo malum, custodia in oculo, etc. [TN: "They relate that the worship of the gods was first established among them, and the earliest sacred ceremonies. That there was a twofold use of letters: those called sacred were known only to the priests, the other kind was available to the common people. Yet the forms of the letters were not such that syllables could be composed from them, but were very similar to living creatures, to the extremities of the human body, and to various tools of craftsmen, and each figure had its own meaning inherent in it; as swiftness in the hawk, evil in the crocodile, guardianship in the eye, etc."] Nevertheless, because from time to time this scholiast asserts something that it does not seem to me he really knows, since from the statements of many other more weighty authors one can argue to the contrary, I do not believe him entirely. Now, to return to the point, as Your Lordship sees, in China there are hieroglyphics, or something similar to them, that serve as characters of writing: in what manner? That is the question.

That word which beneath one of those alphabets reads PELV, treating of the things and countries of the East Indies, means PEGU [TN: the kingdom of Pegu, in modern Myanmar], which is a kingdom situated on the Bay of Bengal on the eastern coast of said Bay, whose king puts many hundreds of thousands of fighting men in the field (they say), and in his land are born the finest and largest rubies; and from what these Portuguese who have been there report — and they are many, it being some 250 to 300 leagues from the coast of India — this land seems to me a veritable land of plenty,[2] with a hen being worth 10 or 12 *quattrini* [TN: a small coin], a cow one

real, and other things in proportion:[3] of which I may perhaps be able to give a more particular account, if God grants me the grace of bringing me there to those parts.

I do not wish to omit telling Your Lordship what some report who have traveled through that land of western Ethiopia, which extends from 6 to 46 degrees of latitude on this northern side of ours, who say as a most certain thing that there is a species of very large apes that mate with the black women of those

> [1] *Cosa* [thing]. Omitted in the printed edition.
>
> [2] *Land of plenty* [*la cuccagna*]. The printed edition reads *una Cuccagna*.
>
> [3] *In proportion* [*All'avvenante*]. Already noted as an archaic expression by the Crusca dictionary, and means *proportionately*.

[p. 241] lands, who live in those forests; and from that union are born, as it were, satyrs who from the waist down are apes and from the waist up have human form; they speak little and with little distinctness, and almost always weep, and serve others as guards — whether of the house, or of livestock, or in similar tasks — without having the faculty of invention. I have seen here black women who come from that mainland which faces the island of San Lorenzo [TN: Madagascar], and from the said island as well, of whom whoever saw nothing but the head would think them monkeys. If other people than the Portuguese went to those countries, one might believe that what is said above were not true, since none of these monsters have ever been brought to Portugal; but since it is this people that goes there, we should not marvel at it.

Of the aspalathus plant [TN: *Aspalathus*, a genus of plants; possibly referring to a dye-producing shrub], which Your Lordship asks me about, I know nothing; and since that Quarantotto says he saw it in the kingdom of

Poland, there should be no reason at all to make the effort to find it in India, the countries being so very different. There will be no lack of many new plants to treasure up, as Your Lordship says, if there be aptitude and leisure for it.

I expect to depart from here in 8 or 10 days at the most, unless these Castilians[1] do something of their sort: going safely, I shall not feel the injury received last year. Here[2] I shall leave orders for there to be sent to Your Lordship, with the first available ship — which will not be before September — the cinnamon water, which in the meantime will come fresh from India, and also the porcelain pieces that Francesco requests on your behalf, those available not having been such as I wished in order to serve you; and from India I shall think of continuing to supply you with these things; and cinnamon water, so long as it does not harm the liver, will certainly not harm the head.

The news Your Lordship gives me of messer Piero [TN: Piero Vettori, the great Florentine humanist scholar] is not out of keeping with his age and years, but most contrary to what everyone should wish, he being one of those instruments that ought never to die. I beg Your Lordship to greet him in my name, and if I shall not have the grace of finding him again when I return one day, it will not seem to me to have gone ill if my first letters from In-

[1] *Castilians* [*Castiglianesi*]. That is, Castilians; and this way of calling them reminds me of Guicciardini, who in his histories calls the Portuguese *Portogallesi*.

[2] *Here*. What follows is unpublished; except that the printed edition ends with these sole final and imprecise words: “God give Your Lordship as much happiness as I wish you, and guard you from harm.”

[p. 242] -dia find him still: from whence I shall write to him, giving him

news of my voyage and of some of those things that are most different from ours. If before my departure I could have news of the delivery of Your Lordship's lady wife, I would have the greatest joy, and all the more if a male child were born; to whom, be it male or female, one must follow and another and then another. May the Lord God give Your Lordship as much happiness in this and in every other undertaking of yours, as I wish you, and guard you from harm. From Lisbon, the 1st of March 1583.

Your Most Illustrious Lordship's

Most affectionate servant.

LXXX. To Francesco Valori, in Florence. Unpublished.[2]

He informs him of mercantile affairs, of an illness of Bondelmonti, and of the preparations being made in Portugal for a great naval fleet.

Most Magnificent Sir, my most honored,

In great haste I believe I shall reply to two of your most welcome letters — that is, I shall acknowledge them, for in reply to them I do not have much to tell you. We are still here, and we await both the weather and the dispatch from Madrid signed[3] by His Majesty: may it please God that the one and the other come in good time, so that we may go about our business.

I told you how I had not been able to serve Signor Baccio Valori with the porcelain he asked of me, because this season they have sold out everything,[4] and therefore one must wait until I go to India. I received a letter of his a few days ago, to which the reply will accompany this. He desires some little thing, and instructs me to draw the cost on him; to which end I have drawn 20 *scudi* on you in several sums, which

[1] The day of the date is missing; in the printed edition it is the 12th.

[2] Autograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana.

[3] *Signed* [*Firmato*]. If Alfieri in Satire 7 used *firma*; if Perticari in his *Difesa di Dante* wrote of the treaty of peace between Carthage and Rome *firmato* in the third century; and yet both words were considered by some to be of dubious coinage — now, with the example of a *cinquecentista* [sixteenth-century writer], it seems to me the matter changes.

[4] *This season they have sold out everything* [*hanno secco ogni cosa*]. That is, perhaps, that the sellers of porcelain have dried up (exhausted, disposed of) all their merchandise.

[p. 243] you will have him reimburse you: and if before departure one could learn some particular about the delivery of his or your wife, I would have been glad of it, so as not to have to wait 18 months to hear the news — a thing you ought to have considered beforehand and hurried along a little. At the last mail, messer Giovanni showed me the other letter of yours about the 100 *scudi* you were lending him: and since you wrote nothing to me about it in your letters, the complaints came forth at once. I assure you further that, had you written to him, I would readily have taken up this charge: then the order came, and all is well. In execution thereof I have drawn 100 gold *scudi* on Augusto and Baccio Dini, the value here from the Fantoni and Nesi: settle it up, and together with messer Giovanni keep an account of it. May God give him good fortune with them.

He fell ill a few days ago so badly that I was afraid he would neither go nor stay [TN: i.e., that he would die]: nevertheless he was bled most promptly, to the tune of 40 ounces of blood. He is well now, except that he is a little pale in the face, and it will not be long before he writes to you on this occasion: consider it received. I have no further news to report to you of things here. This fleet for India stands ready, and, as I tell you, it is to depart with the first favorable weather, for everything is very well prepared. Five ships are going, large and enormous beyond measure, and if Your Lordship does not take it amiss,[1] it seems to me they will carry more than a million and a half in gold in cash; and then there are many goods, the bulk of which are wines. Of all this business, my share falls to me and then some: pray God that He send them safe, and that there be there some good opportunity to satisfy all parties — which one may doubt, given the great quantity of business going there.

Your people have not wanted anything this year, and they have done well: may it please God to give them satisfaction for what they sent last year, as I still hope, notwithstanding my absence, and as I wrote to you. The other

ship that turned back was bound for Malacca, and there was no capital of yours aboard; therefore no other order was needed. And for the future, in any business of yours that may arise here, both partners will be present, Fantoni and Nesi,

> [1] *Your Lordship does not take it amiss* [*V. M. no lo tiene por enojo*]. A Spanish expression meaning: Your Lordship should not take offense at this; or perhaps, should not take it the wrong way.

[p. 244] who should not fail to serve their friends, even if they were to part ways[1] entirely — which thing has not happened so far, notwithstanding the termination of the *accomandita* [TN: a form of limited commercial partnership] that took place there; which must have somewhat unsettled their tempers more than they were before, and in the end each will have to look after his own affairs[2] by himself, and remain more kinsmen than friends: a thing that is unbecoming to the one and the other. But this country makes heads like marble, for your information.

You will already have heard of the great disaster that befell that cheese-maker of ours, in which I have been unlucky, and therefore it will be well to give it up. From India I shall go on thinking of a suitable reply, if it be true that I get myself there; if not, you will have, as I do, a fine and goodly patience.

Since the court departed, we have had almost no news at all. Here they are preparing a fleet, one of the most powerful ever assembled for these seas: and what vessels, good gods! Castles and towers, carrying 60 and 70 pieces of bronze ordnance of marvelous size; and if it sails in time and in a fitting manner, so that it does not do as last year, as regards the sea, no one will be able to withstand[3] it. That island [TN: likely referring to the Azores, then contested between Spain and Portuguese pretenders] is very well fortified, but the inhabitants are exhausted and wretched; and their natural indolence

is the reason they do not think of revolt, to which they are all inclined and well disposed; but the foreign soldiery keeps them subjugated: yet since from everywhere many needs converge and very little money, I do not know how long the situation can last.

What else? To remind you to stay well and not become a barrel[4] entirely. That you should wish me the usual affection, as I do you, would be, in my opinion, superfluous. It could be that Francesco Bonciani is still there: commend me to him in that case, as warmly as you possibly can, and greet all our friends, and pray God for me. From Lisbon, the 3rd of April 1583.

Tell Signor Baccio about the 20 ducats that I have taken on his behalf, because the letter was sealed and I did not open it.

Your most affectionate

[1] *Part ways* [*Discompadrassero*]. Roughly, were frightened off; or were to separate — or what do I know. The cause of such a rupture was mentioned on p. 216.

[2] *His own affairs* [*Il fatto suo*]. The manuscript reads *il fuchit so*.

[3] *Withstand* [*Contastare*]. "The ancients said *contasto* and *contastare* much more willingly than *contrasto* and *contrastare*." — Colombo.

[4] *Barrel* [*Tonello*]. So I read, without knowing more. [TN: i.e., Marcucci is uncertain of the word; likely a jesting reference to Valori's girth.]

[p. 245]

LXXXI. To Francesco Valori, in Florence. Published.[1]

He informs him of his mercantile affairs and of the unhappy voyage made by the ship on which he was embarked. He describes the illness of scurvy, and the territory and inhabitants of Cochin [TN: modern Kochi, in Kerala], speaking also somewhat of their customs and their religion.

Most Magnificent Sir, my most honored,

If I had had well in hand the rules of the *Galateo* [TN: Giovanni della Casa's famous treatise on manners], or even taken some account of them, I would have refrained from advising you about sending or not sending money to India, since you did not ask me: but the devil's in it;[2] everyone wants to appear to have fine schemes at hand, and goes fortifying his resolutions, when nothing better can be done, at the expense of friends. What are we to do about it? That's how it stands,[3] as I tell you.

One part of your money came to go bad and be lost (I say for you, for, as to the case in itself, it is said here that everything that ship was carrying, according to him, was saved); another part had come back; and two parts, making four in all, sit in India indisposed. Oh, what good fortune if la Tancina can already go in search of her husband, since I proposed this venture to you as a way to make her dowry!

I am sending your people a copy of the letter that Lorenzo Strozzi writes me from Goa, where he gives the reason why they remain indisposed. And as for this year, it will have been a good guess not to buy anything to send to Portugal, because the prices of everything are higher here than they are in Portugal; and since they have lost two years' time, they will lose another in order to hand over what they can manage to my hands, for I could

perhaps send them[4] to a place where neither you nor I would have any more trouble over them. Leave it to me for a bit, and if you have reason to be pleased this time, I forgive you.

> [1] Collated with the autograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana.
>
> [2] *But the devil's in it* [*Ma egli è il diavolo*]. Also at pp. 248 and 264, and in a more Hispanicized form at p. 217: *è diablo*.
>
> [3] *What are we to do about it? That's how it stands, etc.* [*Che gli faremo? La sta così*]. The printed edition reads: *Che faremo? Ella sta così*.
>
> [4] *Send them* [*Mandameli*]. The printed edition reads *mandarglieli*.

[p. 246] As for going on to propose some other scheme to you, I shall pass over it briefly, because I think this will suffice you and you will want no more Indian business. You know what that porter in Venice dressed as a bishop used to say: *fasi mo vu* [TN: Venetian dialect: "now you do it" — i.e., it's your turn]. This is as much as I have to say on this head, of which I have dispatched myself, as that priest said to his clerk who reproached him for not having known how to read a difficult passage: "Didn't I skip it well?" said he.

As for the rest, we did finally get here, though after seven months, with the most arduous voyage any ship ever had: ask for our story, which I am sending to Signor Lorenzo Canigiani. Seven months at sea always always, and not become a fish, eh? These are monstrous things: and messer Nicio[1] [TN: a reference to a timid, comfort-loving character, possibly from Machiavelli's *La Mandragola*] certainly did not make it this far, for he would still be saying to this day: *water!*

The other four ships of our company, with their pilot's better judgment, overcame the difficulties sooner than we did, and making their way

between the coast of Africa and the island of San Lorenzo [TN: Madagascar], they reached Mozambique, where they rested for 20 or 25 days; and departing from there, they came to Goa at the customary time, without ever having a single hardship, or even striking sail once; and, arriving here, they had the opportunity to do their business in whole or in part, according to the circumstances of each.

Our pilot, who the year before had run aground in Brazil [TN: *Verzino*, Portuguese *Brasil*] upon those shallows, frightened this time, before setting himself to cross the equator, kept so close to the coast of Guinea that, the winds dying down, we wandered about there a wretched 46 days; and losing this time and this opportunity, we found all the seasons and winds changed in such a way that, besides running as lost men utterly lost, when we came to round the Cape of Good Hope, we then found contrary winds, so that between that place and the island of San Lorenzo, we were detained more than another 45 days; and having already run so far on in time, we were forced to go around the outside of said island without making landfall anywhere — a most arduous thing. And precisely when we were abeam of the middle of it, we came upon a chain of shoals called the Garagiai [TN: probably the Bassas da India or similar reef hazards in the Mozambique Channel], the most dangerous and fearsome in this entire route; where whoever

> [1] *Messer Nicio*. Or *Nicla*, as written at pp. 15 and 279.

[p. 247] strikes has no remedy whatsoever, there being nothing but three or four sandbars where there is no water nor tree nor anything at all, and the heat so great that eggs hatch there without being brooded. It pleased God to pull us out and at the same time deliver us from other hardships, because rounding the whole of that island, we entered these seas of India, where there are no storms nor forceful[1] winds, nor does the sea swell, but always

there is calm and a wind as gentle as the sea, which is always smooth and so delightful to the sight that no one would recognize it as the same as before; and well might one say to it what that Bergamask said, who, having escaped from a great tempest and then seeing the sea very calm, exclaimed: *Mo el fa el gatton* [TN: Bergamask dialect: "Now it plays the pussycat" — i.e., it pretends to be tame].[2]

And, to return[3] to the point, the sight of but a single day of such tranquil waves makes all hardship seem well spent. And yet, as we came here suspecting what had indeed happened — that the other ships had gone to Goa, to my very great damage since three-quarters of my commissions would go into others' hands — I came very dejected; but, arrived here, I gave thanks to God that the money that was to be consigned to me had gone into the hands of others, given the wretched opportunity there was to invest a single *badalucco*[4] [TN: a small coin or trifling sum], reckoning that in Goa they would have had either better opportunity, or, if they had made disadvantageous deals, others would be the ones giving the bad reports. But even in this I have had bad news, because Lorenzo Strozzi has more than 20 ducats[5] left over in his hands, of money he received in my absence, and he holds them at my disposal, and others have been consigned to me

[1] *Forceful* [*Forzosi*]. The printed edition reads *tozzoli* [squat, stumpy]. In some dictionaries as well, on the authority of Sassetti's example, the adjective *tozzo* has gone on display, to the scant consolation of the winds, to which force is more proper than stumpiness.

[2] *Exclaimed*. So written. The printed edition reads *esclamò*. The Bergamask saying means: "Now it plays the tomcat" — which is indeed a good Italian phrase; but more commonly *la gatta morta* [the dead cat, i.e., playing possum], and in more Florentine style *la gatta di Masino*, who closed her eyes when the mice went by — that is, she pretended to be dead, and was not.

[3] *And, to return*. Missing from the printed edition.

[4] *Badalucco*. The printed edition reads *badalucco*. This is a trifle, which has nothing to do with the argument: the other [word] is an Indian coin of very little value, something less than a *picciolo* [TN: the smallest Florentine coin].

[5] *Ducats*. Or perhaps *scudi*. It is in cipher, and missing from the printed edition.

[p. 248] and they consign them here, where there is nothing[1] in which to invest with hope of profit: so that I shall remain here with them in my hands. And as for the interest and profit of friends, it is better so, because[2] the profit does not repay the time that is lost; but since everyone desires to see his own money face to face, it is the devil. Nevertheless I can do nothing more about it, and I am not going to despair.

Returning to the voyage: messer Giovanni, Orazio, and I have been always well, by the grace of God. It is true, however, that if we had had to go further, or stay 15 days more at sea, we would have fared badly, because I at least was already beginning to feel the illnesses common to this route, from which 160 people fell sick in a single day. The illnesses are these: the gums begin to swell in an ugly manner, and to impede eating, especially of biscuit; in some they rot and fall away; in others they grow so thick that they must be cut with a razor to be able to close the mouth, which, when they come down with this ailment, gives off a smell as foul as you can imagine. Along with the gums, the knees swell and then the whole legs little by little, and certain spots like freckles appear on them, which go on spreading until they cover the entire leg, and the swelling causes such pain that it is the greatest pity to see the poor sick men. No fever is detected, but shortly afterward comes a pain in the chest, which does not however prevent breathing, but does indeed end life. Death follows this event within two days, the person going out almost like a lamp for want of oil. Now of these sick men we disembarked at the hospital as many as 160, who today are nearly all recovered, save for two who came so badly off that they died upon being brought ashore. Nor did we fail to have, within sight of land,[3] a

bit of trouble, for we lay becalmed eight days without being able to reach it.

There came to us these folk from the land in their little boats, in which one man rows with an oar[4] resembling a skimming ladle. They brought

[1] *Nothing* [*Niente*]. The printed edition reads *nulla*.

[2] *Because* [*Perchè*]. The printed edition reads *che*.

[3] *Within sight of land*. In the manuscript the preposition *a* is omitted.

[4] *With an oar* [*Con un remo*]. The printed edition reads *con remo*.

[p. 249] us their little wares: leaves of *betel* [TN: the betel leaf, *Piper betle*, chewed as a stimulant across South and Southeast Asia], which is their common food; certain figs of theirs shaped like little horns; coconuts, or Indian nuts, which when unripe are called *lagne* [TN: likely *lanhas*, Portuguese for young coconuts], and are much prized for being full inside of a very sweet water most pleasing to the taste, and particularly when they are fresh, which they say are very healthful. Other small fruits they brought us, worthless beyond measure, which were immediately priced by messer Giovanni from two to a *quattrino* at two *reais* each, the purveyor of provisions who was on the ship protesting as much as he could, but there was no remedy; they did not come down in price until[1] we were on land.

Now these people are very extravagant in their dress, keeping the greatest tailor in the world to make their garments; and that is the Lord God Himself: I mean to say that they go naked, from the lowest to the king of this land. We went to kiss his hands at his dwelling there in a palm grove, where he gave us a good and gracious audience and dismissed us in very few words. The town where this king keeps his palaces and where his citizens live is like so many pigsties as there are houses; and I do not say this to belittle other people's things, but consider that they are sunk a little

below the ground, and that inside a man cannot stand upright. The walls, and the roof too, are all of palm leaves; and the door and the windows are one and the same thing. I never saw an uglier sight than that.

The life of the inhabitants is varied, for there are Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus], Jews, and Moors [TN: Muslims]. Among the Gentiles there is a race who are foreigners throughout this land of India, called Brahmins, who may not kill any living thing; indeed, finding themselves where hens or other animals are being killed, they buy them in order to give them their lives. These have many good customs in their laws, but they do not observe them. They have the bond of matrimony most strictly, insomuch that when the husband dies, when the body is taken to be burned, the surviving wife casts herself as well into the pyre, whatever anyone back there may say about it. It is true that this is by her own choice; but there is a practice, in order always to preserve the good custom, that at the moment of making the decision she drinks a potion that drives her into a frenzy and a fury, and makes her run to that

> [1] *Until* [*Sì*]. The printed edition reads *sinché*. See note 3 on p. 138.

[p. 250] fire. They say[1] that this custom originated in the widows' giving themselves up freely in former times; but I hold for certain that it depends on the strictness of the bond between husband and wife among these people.

The other native Gentiles do not understand things in this manner, neither in eating nor in submitting to the brain of one wife, because they eat everything, and take more than one wife, as many as they wish; and the women likewise have their appetites satisfied when they come upon them — and this openly, for no one takes any notice of it: only the man who goes to be with her leaves at the door, not the beast — which could not be done, because it is pushy[2] — but his sword and buckler, which means that the

lady is accompanied; and whoever comes after goes away to his own consolations. Hence it is that this second class of people does not recognize its own offspring; for, although they call son whoever is born in the house, they do not for all that leave them anything, but the heirs are the sons of the sister, it being certain that they are born from that woman's side and of the same blood: and this is the practice throughout this coast of India, both among the kings and among the rooks,[3] the knights, and the bishops [TN: Sassetti is playfully using chess-piece terminology — *rocchi* (rooks), *cavalli* (knights), *alfini/delfini* (bishops) — to describe the social hierarchy, echoing a line from the poet Burchiello].

This is almost entirely a people of war, and they have nothing of their own except what the king gives them,[4] which is so many palm-groves that yield them so many coconuts; and it will never be the case that you come upon them without their arms, which are: some carry sword and buckler, others bow and arrows; others are arquebusiers, and others carry javelins made in their fashion. A few among them are merchants, whom they call *Ciattini* [TN: likely *Chetties* or *Chettiar*, a South Indian merchant caste], and they deal in all sorts of things.

Those other wretches, the Brah-

[1] *They say, etc.*, as is reported among others, with still other opinions, by Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, Sonnerat, Colvins, Hodges, and Maitebrun. This barbarous custom was nonetheless celebrated by the poetic fancy of Propertius in those fine verses found in his thirteenth elegy of the third book.

[2] *Pushy* [*Entrante*]. So, but doubtfully, in the manuscript, and perhaps more properly than *entrato* [entered], as the printed edition has, it seeming to me to relate to *bestia* [beast] in an equivocal sense.

[3] *Rooks* [*Rocchi*]. From *rocco* [the rook in chess]. In a similar fashion Burchiello: "Rooks, knights, bishops, and pawns."

[4] *Gives them* [*Li dà*]. The printed edition reads *le dà*, having always maintained the substitution of this pronoun, as though it were not known that such was the usage among the ancients, in addition to what was noted in note 3 on p. 121.

[5] *Which are: some carry sword and buckler, others bow, etc.* The printed edition reads: *which are of some sword and buckler, of others bow, etc.* After the second *altri*, *sono* [are] is also repeated.

[p. 251] -mins are all either brokers or merchants, as lazy as bedbugs. They shout among themselves a kind of barking that the devil himself would not understand; and when they come to fisticuffs, they are held among themselves to be murderers and thieves, and every sort of evil. As for deceiving others, give up hope on that score, for they do it if they can; but if one catches them at it, in the man's own house he takes justice into his own hands, for they are beaten like inflated calves.[2]

Now I have written you at length, and have said few things, and those of no value. Forgive and pardon me, considering that I can do no more, Orazio having fallen ill at the very worst moment. May God be thanked for everything. I remind you to keep me in your good graces and those of our friends; and greet our Signor Giovanni[3] on my behalf, and offer my services wherever I may be of use and able. Commend me to your brother, and be affectionate with your lady wife.[4] Farewell. In Cochin, [undated] December 1583.

Most affectionate,

That blessed, etc.[5]

[1] *These, as for deceiving others* [*Questi d'ingannare altrui*]. The editors, for greater clarity, correct to: *quanto a ingannare altrui*; unless the manuscript's *questi* should be read as *questo* [this].

[2] *They are beaten like inflated calves* [*Si tamburano come vitelle gonfiate*]. Lippi in the *Malmantile*, Canto XI, st. 26: "They drum one another like calves."

[3] *Our*. Or perhaps *your*, that is, messer Francesco's father-in-law: the word is indistinctly abbreviated and missing from the printed edition.

[4] *Lady wife* [*Signora*]. We still say it today, with more grace and less affectation than *donna*, for wife.

[5] *That blessed*. See p. 158, note 1. I find subsequently these words: "A consignment of goods he has not received by this ship; if it comes by another, he will bring it."

LXXXI bis. Letter of Giovanni Bondelmonti to Francesco Valori.[1]

He narrates his voyage and arrival at Cochin, and the illnesses suffered during the navigation; and describes the customs of the king of Cochin and of those Malabar peoples, and their fruits, and the animals of the country.

Most Magnificent Signor Francesco, most honored,

This time we had an advantage of two months, because the other ships arrived in five and we in seven, and we went by the outside and the others by the inside, and they were at Mozambique for 45 days, and afterward in Goa; and our not having gone to Goa costs Signor Filippo close to five thousand *scudi*; and then we suffered so much hardship that had we been 45 days more in arriving, more than 400 persons on our ship would have died. Besides the 25 or so who died by falling into the sea, some 180 sick were disembarked. We, by the grace of God, have always been well.

There comes an illness without fever:

[1] This is the letter which gave me occasion to publish the other two by Valori and Vecchietti. Not having collated it with any manuscript, I have relied on the editors who found it among those few letters of Sassetti's, and did well to print it, since it treats matters of the same subject, and I would add, with the same grace of language. Nor is it lacking in turns of phrase and words worth collecting, such as the following: *Sbarcarsi* [to disembark], in the reflexive passive sense, there being in the Crusca only one example among three of the neuter form, though other authors used it as well. I cite in confirmation Serdonati, *Storie delle Indie Orientali*, Book III, Letter 2: "We disembarked on the 21st of November, which is the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mother of God." And there: "We disembarked on land." — *Cacivacca*, for a tiny place of no importance; almost *bicocca* [hovel]. The etymology of this

word may be found in Franciosini's Spanish dictionary, which says: *Cachivache* or *Trichitranque*: "Trifles, trumpery, that is, all the broken, ruined, and poorly kept things among household goods." — *Postarsi*, in the reflexive passive sense, for to halt, to station oneself: registered in Manuzzi's Vocabolario together with *Capannaccia* and *Seggiolaccia*, pejoratives of *capanna* [hut] and *seggiola* [chair], and with *Riconoscitore*, in the meaning of restorer, one who returns. — *Cavalcare*, in the active sense, as in § VI. — *Frutta*; the same as *frutto* [fruit]. The Crusca brought out this word but gave no example of the singular number to suggest that *frutte* is the plural of *frutta*, rather than one of the four plural endings of *frutto*, including *fruttora*. Another example is furnished by Sassetti on p. 212. — *Risorgere la casa*, for to restore the house, to rebuild it: in the same sense in which Sassetti also says *rifare la casa o la famiglia*, to re-found it. — *Essere con moglie*, for to be married.

[p. 253] the gums swell in such a manner that they cover the teeth; and also the legs swell and become black as a little monk [TN: *monachino*, referring to the dark color, perhaps also a coal-like appearance], and of that one dies: and, in my opinion, it comes from the hardship, because they live on the ration the king gives, which is very little. Yet when one reaches a good port, everything is well.

We arrived at Cochin, and after 7 months and one day we disembarked. We arrived, you may imagine, at a worthless little hole without walls and without a fortress; and what they call a fortress is a big ugly house; and if this dog of a king of Cochin wished to have us cut to pieces, he could well do so at his pleasure, because we are four barefoot wretches and would have no defense whatsoever. Because when he comes here (for his ordinary residence is half a league away), he sometimes comes to visit the captain, or another man who keeps account of the king's affairs and is called the *factor of the business* [TN: the Portuguese *feitor da fazenda*, the royal factor]; and this king comes here with eight or ten thousand people, and all with their weapons, which they have the custom, whether in peace or war, of always carrying: such as, we would say, arquebuses, half-pikes — some

with…, some with bucklers and curved swords, which are curved inward, and the sword has no point, being broad at the tip and short, but they cut like a razor — others have a certain throwing weapon; and so they always have them with them.

The king came here with this retinue, but now he is at war with forty thousand men less than 20 leagues from here; and the other day he came by here to pay his respects to this factor, who arrived this year; and he stationed himself a league from here beyond a river, whence this factor went to kiss his hand, and we of the household went in his company. We found him, as it were, in a big ugly hut seated in a wretched chair that you would get from a junk dealer for 4 *crazie* [TN: a small Florentine coin], and there was another where the factor sat; and one speaks to him as "Your Highness" and through an interpreter, although they say he understands and can speak Portuguese; and he carries himself with great majesty. Ordinarily these people go naked: on that occasion he had put on, as we might say, a shirt down to his feet. He was barefoot, and with his ears pierced and full of gold and jewels that hung down to his shoulders. We stayed about a quarter of an hour; and in truth he is a very handsome man and has the face of a king; he is tall and has a jovial countenance. He had with him about 100 men.

These people keep no faith, and believe in the first thing they see in the morning. Their women

[p. 254] are common property, and cannot say no; and when one of these men enters a house to be with one of these women, he leaves his weapons outside as a sign; and none would be so bold as to go disturb him upon seeing this sign. There was once here a woman very beautiful, as the country produces them, who grew tired of being so often mounted, and so to get some rest she resolved to keep a sword and buckler at her door; but

she was discovered and punished very severely. Moreover, the king pays a Brahmin money to mount his favorite wife.

These Brahmins are a people who eat no living things that have blood. They believe in a God of their own, and eat rice, milk, and an herb called *betel*,[1] which they say is of great sustenance; and you see them continually chewing this leaf. Here everyone has teeth black as ebony, which is caused by this betel; but beneath that blackness there is great quality of teeth, because they are so hard that with that leaf they eat a seed that is inside, like a nutmeg and just as hard — I have tried with a stone and had difficulty cracking it, yet they chew it with their teeth. Here no one ever has a toothache, and this whole race eats it. When the king wishes to favor someone, he gives him a leaf of betel.

We think that one cannot live without bread, yet here they never eat it, and they live on rice; and I tell you that there are certain black men here in the house who would rather have rice than bread; and no one here knows what wheat bread is.

In this country there is none of our fruit. There is one kind, which they call figs, that have the appearance of one of our figs. They have a pod of five beans, and are round, and there are several kinds, yellow and green, and they last all year; you peel off a skin and eat them. If God grants that we see each other again, I want to bring some of these fruits either in wax or in preserves. There is a fruit called *manas* [TN: *ananás*, pineapple], which is shaped like a pine cone but larger, and you peel it. This, to us Florentines, seems the best there is. There is another, which is like a large *mela appiola* [TN: a variety of small apple], called *gabbo* [TN: likely the cashew apple]; and it produces a nut on the flower like those I sent to Tommaso, which you must have seen. There is another as large as

[1] *Betel*. Others write *betel*; Serdonati writes *befele* and Sassetti *belle*; whose

leaves, according to Terry, very much resemble those of ivy.

[p. 255] a melon, which is full of those little baskets [TN: i.e., segments or seed-cavities, probably referring to jackfruit]: in short, there are many kinds of fruit, and very strange ones.

Of fowl there are only crows, and… They say that Florentines, Franciscan friars, and sparrows are found all over the world;[1] but of sparrows there are none here. There are many hens, but they are insipid; peacocks and wild hens, and a kind of partridge that does not resemble ours, having two spurs per leg so sharp they could pierce a hand; and yet these are tasteless meats of little sustenance.

The air is good here, but very hot, because the total clothing one wears, from head to foot, amounts to between 18 ounces and half a pound, and one goes barefoot and bare-legged; and the shirts are so thin that one cannot find the way to put them on in the dark. In short, one lives a wretched life. God grant that I save enough to be able to return home.

I thank you for the kindness and courtesy of the 100 *scudi*, of which I shall be a good acknowledger, and I shall not repay you with ingratitude. For this time there is so much to do that there is no time to write; and also I am not yet well informed about the country, and I do not wish to write lies; rather I consider them histories, but not those of Giovio.[2]

Meanwhile keep me in your good graces, and attend to making children so that you may restore the house. I beg you to kiss the hands of your brother Signor Baccio on my behalf; likewise I beg you to kiss the hands of and keep me in the good graces of Signor Giovanni da Sommaia; and, if I can do anything for them, let them

[1] *They say that Florentines, etc.* A variant of the proverb: “Bergamasques, Florentines, and sparrows — the whole world is full of them.” And Pope

Boniface VIII said it well, seeing that all the ambassadors sent to him during the Jubilee of 1300 from various courts of Europe and Asia were Florentines, "that the Florentines were the fifth element; and that whoever wished to destroy the universe should remove the Florentines."

[2] *Giovio*. A sorry reputation was acquired by Paolo Giovio of Como, Bishop of Nocera (1483–1552), who remained a byword for venal historians, having not concealed his craving for gifts from all, and professing to have two pens for writing either well or ill, according to the rewards or the expectations…. Paolo Giovio requests now a painting, now a fur, now a horse, now sweets, making it understood that he will punish with his pen those who do not sate his greed. — Cantù, *Letteratura italiana*. Pietro Aretino (another fine specimen), against whom Giovio wrote that well-known epitaph *Qui giace l'Aretin, poeta tosco*, etc., retorted thus: "Here lies Giovio, that most lofty historian: / He spoke ill of all, except the ass, / Excusing himself by saying: he is my neighbor."

[p. 256] command me, for I desire very much to serve them. Also commend me to your brother, to the Signori Strozzi, to Signor Rucellai, and in short to all those whom you think wish me well; and in particular to Signor Lelio Torelli,[1] very very much, for I think that by now he will be married: and tell him not to be so hopeless that he does not know how to make a son; let him learn from you, and you as a friend will teach him.

Up to now I have seen the cinnamon tree, and likewise the pepper plant. At the next post I shall make it up to you, for I shall have a year's time. We arrived here late, and immediately business begins, and one works day and night, and there are more than 200 people in this house who are laboring. Nothing more: and may the Lord God always help us. In the Indies, at Cochin, the 24th of December 1583.

Your Lordship's

Affectionate, to serve you as a faithful friend,

Giovanni Buondelmonti.

[1] *Lelio Torelli*. Nephew of that celebrated Lelio whom Sassetti, in the eulogy he delivered on the 22nd of June 1576 in the church of the Madonna de' Ricci, calls the father of jurisprudence.

LXXXII. To Maria Sassetti née Bartoli, in Florence. Published.

He speaks to her of his voyage and of the unfavorable turn his business affairs were taking; and amid pleasant jesting mingles wise counsels and teachings for the good governance of the family.

Most honored and dearest sister,

Come come, in the end one arrives; and whoever reaches safety, as we did, has to thank God for all the other things, which have been neither so few nor so small that one would ordinarily forget them.[2] We were seven months at sea, and we did not become fish: see if

> [2] *Forget* [*Sdimenticare*]. In place of the *sonnificare* of the printed edition, I have chosen this other verb which the edition itself proposes to me in the Table of certain variant readings, additions, and corrections, to which (without further notice) it is understood I have had recourse whenever our edition does not correspond to that of the *Prose Fiorentine*, where the standard text could not be collated with the autograph.

[p. 257] this was not a thing for brave men. We departed from Lisbon on the 8th of April, and arrived here at a land of black people called Cochin, on the 8th of November. The other ships that departed together with us had a better voyage, for they were five months on the way and went to Goa, which is the principal city of India, and on the way they put in at a port called Mozambique, where they went ashore and rested 20 days or more; so that, when I consider the difference between their voyage and ours — which was so bad and arduous, and theirs so good — I go on reckoning that we must have been better than our companions, because tribulations and hardships, as you know, are given to the good — or else that we had more

sins. I don't know: you think about it a little, and settle this matter among yourselves over there.

As for health, I have always been well, by the grace of God: it is true, however, that if we had had to stay at sea even a tiny bit longer, we would have fallen into the same misfortune as the others, because already the legs and gums were swelling — which are pestilential and cruel ailments, from which in a single day nearly the whole ship fell ill. It is also true that one was already living with great difficulty, everything necessary being lacking.

Now this is as much for the voyage: as for the rest, our affairs go, as you know, well — just as they went for Don Vincenzio,[1] who instead of bells rang mass with roof tiles: I mean to say that we are in a lean state; and a great part of my earnings remain in Goa, where the other ships went — which, in the end, does not trouble me all that much. What vexes me more is having arrived here, where there is nothing to buy in order to spend the money I have brought with me on behalf of friends; but I do not know what I can do about it, and therefore, in the end, I am not one to despair.

We are here seeing off the first ship that is to depart, which is in great haste, so that a man does not have time to put his hands to his mouth. I have not yet procured anything to send you, but before all the ships leave, something will surely come along; and I shall remember Margherita, who must already be becoming a young lady, and you will have to think about finding her a husband. Here there would be no way to procure one for her, unless she were content with one who was entirely black. It is true that she would have no difficulty helping him undress,

> [1] *Don Vincenzio*. Today they say *San Quintino*. In Florence, when one wishes to speak of someone in the greatest need, this proverb immediately presents itself: "He is poorer than San Quintino, who rang mass with roof tiles."

[p. 258] nor in sewing his shirts and sheets, nor in keeping account of his woolens — all conveniences that count for something. See if she might be so inclined, and let it be known, for with 30 or 35 ducats, or less, one could buy him [TN: i.e., a slave husband — a dark jest].

Once these ships are gone, I shall go to Goa, which is 100 leagues from here, where I shall stay until September or October, awaiting the other ships that are to come, by which you will have sent me your news. May God grant they be such as I desire.

I do not write to Roberto, for I cannot; and all the more readily do I omit it since I know this letter will be shared with him. He is already growing out of boyhood and entering the years of discretion, which I expect he will use to recognize his poor condition and the obligation he has to you — two things which, beyond his natural duty, should set him on the path that persons of honor travel; and so I shall be glad to hear.

Girolamo too will be growing up: would that he be, and may he be, good. Have him learn to write well and to be obedient.

Commend me to Margherita, and do not raise her up so quickly that you need to think about giving her a husband tomorrow or the next day, for that would be trouble. I am sending Carlo Velluti a little necklace of certain small pearls, so that he may send them to you. Give them to her to wear on my behalf, so that when she goes to Mass she will remember to pray to God for me; and commend me to her.

You see to keeping yourself well for your children, who have need of you, as you know, and do not live on dreams as you are wont to do. Commend me to our cousins, and to madonna Ginevra in particular, and remember to pray to God for me, as I know you have done until now; and ask the same of our nuns when you see them, or write to them. I have nothing more to

say: I commend myself to you. Farewell. From Cochin, [undated] December 1583.

Your most affectionate brother.

[p. 259]

LXXXIII. To Baccio Valori, in Florence. Published.[1]

He gives him account of his voyage and arrival at Cochin, and encloses a copy of a letter written by himself to Cardinal de' Medici, who was later Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando I.

Most Illustrious and Excellent,

To recount to Your Excellency the particular events of our long voyage would be a tedious thing. Suffice it that it was, in keeping with my usual luck, ill-starred — or rather I was of poor judgment in boarding again the same ship as the year before, which had come within a hair's breadth[2] of performing the same trick of turning back a second time. Yet she did come forward, and reached this coast of India on the 7th of November, having been 7 months on the way, without ever seeing any other land in all that time save a sand-covered island which lies outside the island of San Lorenzo [TN: Madagascar] at a latitude of 15 degrees on the southern side, where we nearly perished: praised be God who saved us.

The other ships of our company, with a better course — not to say a better star[3] — arrived at Goa on the 20th of September. We came to this ill-fated Cochin, which, although it was the first land where the Portuguese set foot, today is not a very great trading post, the Viceroys in Goa striving to draw there all the business and all the grandeur of this country.

I shall not be liberal with Your Lordship in accounts of the things of this land, because time does not permit me. It seems to me that he who, departing from his own people, gradually moves further away gains little, not tasting the sweetness of the change, going on almost continually with the same things; and on the contrary, he who travels four thousand and

more[4] leagues,

[1] Collated with the autograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana.

[*The letter continues in the next section.*]

[2] *Was within a hair's breadth* [*Fu a tocca e non tocca*]. Understand: it was touch and go.

[3] *And with a better star*. Dante, *Paradiso* I, v. 40: "With a better course and with a better star."

[4] *Four thousand and more* [*Quattromila tante*]. Missing from the printed edition.

[p. 260] [*Continuation of Letter LXXXIII*]

leaving a void from place to place, finds so much diversity that I marvel at the marveling: because, beginning from the elements and passing through all the composite things, I see little conformity with ours, whether in species, or in differences, or in accidents; and whoever were sure of living long, had much to spend, were willing to take on much labor, and had a good knowledge of fine letters, would write marvels, and particularly about the customs of the peoples and the government of their republics or their tyrannies.

And because these generalities, besides not carrying conviction, give no pleasure, and having no more time to steal from the necessary work, I send Your Lordship the copy of a letter I have written to the Lord Cardinal de' Medici — not because it is full of many particular reports, as I would wish to give you, but because, there being something in it, it may for the time being excuse this one, where there is nothing. Perhaps by next year I shall

make up for this deficiency.

The ships that the year before were coming with us did not have a great deal better fortune than we did; for one was lost entirely, another limping made its way to Mozambique, ours turned back, and one got through; and the letters I wrote by the one that came here, I know not how they went astray, for they were not delivered until this year; and the money I was sending (among which were 15 ducats[1] of Your Lordship's on that ship), there being no one found to receive it, returned to Portugal in the hands of the master of that ship, to whom I had consigned it.

Those that were on the ship that stopped at Mozambique have now arrived and are in Goa; and of those that I brought with me this year, I have bought nothing, because here nothing fine or good comes. In Goa I shall see about making up for the delay by procuring something for Your Lordship to your taste.

To Lisbon I am sending, with a ship that is to be dispatched from here in a few days, certain porcelain pieces, with orders that some be sent to Your Lordship, which may serve for your lady wife when she is brought to bed — for I shall well suppose she has continued filling the house. Your Lordship will do me the favor each year of four lines in your own hand, commanding me in some matter; with which I close, begging you to keep me in your good graces:

> [1] *Were 15 ducats*. The editors left blank the number and figure of ducats or *scudi*, whichever they be.

[p. 261] may Our Lord God preserve you in happiness. From this city of Santa Cruz de Cochin, the 20th of January 1584.

Your Lordship's

Most affectionate servant.

LXXXIV. To Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, in Florence. Published.[1]

He recounts all the particulars of his voyage and describes the country of the Malabar coast, the animals found there, and the customs and religion of those inhabitants.

Most Illustrious and Reverend Monsignor,

We departed from Lisbon on the 8th of last April, five ships in company bound for this coast of India: and before we reached the island of Canaria [TN: the Canary Islands], we had all lost sight of one another. The other four ships, with good counsel, went on their way, and crossing the equinoctial at the proper times, came in short order to the Cape of Good Hope, and thence to Mozambique; where the men rested at their pleasure, and re-embarking, came to port in the bay of Goa[2] on the 20th of September, as is customary.

Our pilot, with a different plan, to avoid the mishap of the year before — when he struck certain shoals on the coast of Brazil [TN: *Verzino*, the Portuguese term], whence he turned back — kept so far in the opposite direction toward Guinea that he could not escape those calms until very late, having run the great risk that the same thing as the year before might happen.

[1] Collated with the original in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana, which however is not entirely in the author's hand.

[2] *Bay of Goa*, and further below *bay of Cochin*. Both examples are cited by Manuzzi in the Additions and Corrections to his Vocabolario, with this explanation: *Baia* [Bay]: a kind of small gulf, the entrance to which is narrower

than the middle, where ships are accustomed to shelter from certain winds; *Cala* [Cove]. I, out of due respect, have wished to follow the printed edition, also because *baia di Coccino* and *baia di Goa* are found on p. 271 and elsewhere: I only note that the manuscript reads in both places *barra*, not *baia*. What the *barra* is, here are Sassetti's own words in Letter C: "At the onset of winter the south winds begin to blow, with which the sands from the sea bottom are stirred up and form a bar at the mouth of the ports, which the Portuguese call *Barras*."

[p. 262] We did finally cross the equinoctial on the 10th of June, and afterward the Cape of Good Hope on the 15th of August, and taking the route outside the island of San Lorenzo [TN: Madagascar], it being already too late to go by the inside, we were lost above certain shoals that lie opposite it, called the Garagiai;[1] but, having got clear of them, we came on our way and saw this so longed-for land on the 9th of November, and dropped anchor in this bay of Cochin. God be praised, who brought us safe.

During the voyage we saw nothing new worth writing about, except this: that off Guinea we caught enormous fish (the Portuguese call them *Albacores*, and they are a species of tuna) with snares, without any other bait, notwithstanding that they were swift as arrows; and as though skill wished to recoup itself, in the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope we caught certain very large birds with hooks.

On land, everything new presented itself to sight — the plants as well as the animals and the people. The plants are entirely different from ours, nor can any knowledge of them be given by comparison. The coast is entirely clad in palm trees — those that produce coconuts, and others that bear a fruit they call *areca* [TN: the areca or betel nut, *Areca catechu*], which these black people eat with betel. The other fruits are many and of various shapes; and sending seeds or other samples of them this year has not been possible, because they came late, and at this trading post, deprived of every convenience for such niceties, I have been unable to make any effort in this

respect. But I hope to make amends next year, because going to Goa after the dispatch of these ships, I shall be able to provide myself more conveniently with all these novelties.

Of new domestic animals, we have here elephants, enormous beyond measure, which serve to unload and load the boats on this river. They lift, suspending it from one of their jawbones [TN: i.e., tusks] with a rope, a barrel of four *barili* [TN: a *barile* was a Florentine unit of liquid measure, about 45 liters], with the same ease that a man would carry a weight of 4 or 6 pounds. In the same manner they drag a log that four pairs of our oxen could not: with one alone, they say, a galley is launched[2] and hauled ashore. They are docile and obedient to their keeper, as is said of them.

> [1] *Garagiai*. The printed edition has *Garagai*, and elsewhere *Caragini*.
>
> [2] *With one alone, they say, a galley is launched* [*Con esso dicono che un solo vara una galera*]. The printed edition reads: *they say that one alone of them launches a galley*.

[p. 263] They are sold by measurement of length at 100 gold ducats per *covodo*[1] [TN: the *côvado*, a Portuguese unit of length, approximately 66 cm], and one will cost 1,000 or 1,200 *scudi*, depending on how large they are. Those that are here are so tall that the Nair [TN: a member of the Nair warrior caste of Kerala] who rides on top looks tiny.

Oxen and buffalo are here in great quantity but small, and here in town some serve for riding in our fashion, but inland in the forest they have no other use than carrying loads, like donkeys or mules, and they go through this land carrying pepper or rice, or whatever else is needed, in numbers of eight or ten thousand at a time.

In the forest, so far as I have been able to learn and partly to see from what they bring to sell here, there are all the sorts of game that we have among

us: partridges, but different from ours, for these are small and of darker plumage than our grey partridges, and they have on their legs three sharp spurs like the thorn of a blackthorn bush; wild hens and small cocks, almost the same color in the plumage as the said partridges; there are wild peacocks, and of all these sorts of birds they bring them to sell; hares, deer, goats, wild boar, and some rabbits, but not many. Then there are leopards and tigers, as fierce beasts, so that it is not very safe to go through the forest. Fish of unfamiliar shape I have not seen here. There are in this river, called the Mangate [TN: likely the river at Cochin], crocodiles, which here they call *lagartos* [TN: Portuguese for lizards, the common term for crocodiles in Portuguese India], and they are found in all these rivers along the coast, and in all the others of Asia and Africa, even though they were perhaps believed to be peculiar to the river Nile.

The inhabitants of the entire coast are in great part foreigners: Jews, Moors [TN: Muslims], and Brahmins. The Moors have in many places made themselves absolute lords, and particularly where the Portuguese have not been able to use force. The Jews are here a despised people, as in all other parts, but they are not harassed by the Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus] as they are by the Moors and by the Turks in Barbary and in Constantinople.

The Brahmins are likewise a despised people, who follow the doctrine of Pythagoras as regards diet, because they eat nothing that has feeling, nor do they suffer an ant or a serpent to be killed; and if they see a Christian killing a hen or a pigeon, they buy it to give it its

> [1] *Covodo*. Setting the length of the great elephants ordinarily at ten times the *covodo*, one can estimate, more or less, its correspondence to the Italian measure.

[p. 264] freedom. One sees that their religion inclines toward good morals, but they do not observe them, except in these trifles mentioned above, and

in washing themselves every day two or three times. They wear a thread in three strands across the shoulder, which they call the *linea* [TN: the sacred thread, *upanayana* or *yajñopavīta*, worn by Brahmins], which they receive from their prelate at the age of 10, in which consists the foundation of their religion no otherwise than in baptism consists ours, and upon it they swear their strongest oaths. And if, by chance, any Christian or Moor or anyone else breaks it for them, it is the devil;[1] for they must go to their prelate and perform very great fasts before it is restored to them.

They have certain *Pagodi* [TN: *pagodes*, i.e., temples, or the idol-images within them] of theirs, which they venerate as saints, and these are their idols, referring principally to God everything both in nature and in the will; in which it seems to me they mingle somewhat of necessity and destiny. They are a people as shrewd as the Jews, or more; as base as they,[2] and of no spirit; and they carry no kind of weapon, except a pointless knife. They shout among themselves most loudly, and at most[3] they come to fisticuffs.

These are the people whose wives, when the husband dies, burn themselves with the body of the same husband, although the Portuguese in their territories do not permit it.

The natives of this coast, called Nairs, are likewise Gentiles;[4] in eating less superstitious than the Brahmins, for they do not refuse meat and fish; but they do not eat every kind of meat, because they would not kill a cow on pain of being held wicked. They are a wretched people, who live on betel and areca,[5] chewing this herb all day long, with a little lime smeared on it that they call *cuiname* [TN: *chunnam*, lime paste used with betel]. They eat a little rice, butter, and milk; but that is when they hold feasts.

These too have their *Pagodi* and their idols; but as they are not very sociable people, I have not been able to learn the particulars of their affairs.

They have marriage without danger of adultery, the women providing themselves,

> [1] *It is the devil, etc.* [*Chè gli bisogna, etc.*] Thus in the printed edition the passage is reworked: "for they must go to their prelate and perform very great fasts before it is sold back to them."
>
> [2] *Or more; as base as they*. The printed edition reads: "and baser than they."
>
> [3] *And at most* [*E 'l più più*]. The printed edition reads: "and at the very most."
>
> [4] Here the editors add a *ma* [but], which sits poorly because of the other *ma* repeated shortly after.
>
> [5] *Areca*. The printed edition reads *Arreca*, as also elsewhere: and another manuscript reads *urecca*.

[p. 265] beyond their husband, freely and at their pleasure: the children born in the house do not inherit, but the children of the sisters are the heirs. Of this caste[1] of the Nairs are the kings, of whom there is a great abundance, for every four palm trees have a king; and they say that in ancient times the lord of all this Malabar was the king of Calicut, called the Zamorin [TN: the *Samoothiri* or Zamorin of Calicut, the paramount ruler of the Malabar coast], which means emperor — one of whom, they say, was that black king who went to make his offering to Our Lord;[2] and foreseeing that he would not return alive, they say he distributed his entire realm to the people in his court: but it seems to me that this is false, since the Evangelist says that the said kings returned to their own lands.

Among these natives are many Christians of an ancient sect made by the apostle Saint Thomas [TN: the Saint Thomas Christians of Kerala, one of the oldest Christian communities in the world], who came here to preach, already fallen into many heresies — at least as regards the Roman rite; which[3] has perhaps come in great part from the reforms of the councils not having penetrated[4] here, nor even those that were celebrated in Greece,

whose church's rite they still follow today, their prelate, who has the title of archbishop, being appointed by the Antiochene patriarch [TN: the Patriarch of the Church of the East]. The priests say their masses in the Chaldean language [TN: Syriac], take wives, and practice trade most ruthlessly; and if they could commit any fraud or cheat others, as merchants do, they would do so willingly. They are not obstinate in their heresy, but let themselves be corrected with ease, though in everything it is impossible; and a prelate of theirs, who was tried for heresy by these Fathers of the Society of Jesus, having been given safe conduct, is going to Portugal to come and kiss the feet of Our Lord [TN: i.e., the Pope], and receive from him the confirmation of his rank. They say he is a man of most holy life: may Our Lord guide him.

From Cochin, January 1584.[5]

[1] *Caste* [*Casta*]. The printed edition reads *razza* [race]. See note 3 on p. 166.

[2] *That black king who went to make his offering to Our Lord*. If we are to believe Marco Polo, the three Magi who went to worship the infant Jesus were named Baltasar, Melchior, and Gaspar. From Saba, in Persia, they departed, and there, after death, they were buried.

[3] *Which* [*Che*]. The printed edition reads *il che*.

[4] *Not having penetrated* [*Dal non avere penetrato*]. The printed edition reads *dal non esser penetrate*.

[5] This date is not in the printed edition, and is also missing from the manuscript, where it was not needed, being a copy of the letter to the Cardinal enclosed with the preceding letter to Valori. Hence the customary formulas of compliment were also omitted in the transcription.

LXXXV. To Cavalier Piero Spina, Knight of Malta, in Florence. Published.[1]

He narrates his arduous voyage from Lisbon to the East Indies on the Portuguese ship San Filippo. He then describes the territory and countryside around the city of Cochin, the animals, plants, and fruits produced there, and especially the pineapple. Finally he treats somewhat of the manner of making war used by the peoples of Malabar, and of their priests or Brahmins.

Most Illustrious and Reverend Sir, my honored,

He who has nothing to tell but the same things ought to keep silent, so as not to weary those who listen or read. It is true, however, that when so much time is put in between that the memory grows faint, or at least is not so fresh, it is tolerated. This is what makes me tell Your Lordship again the story of my voyage, from the time I departed Lisbon until I arrived at this coast — all full, in my usual manner, of vexation, of length, of dangers of nearly being lost, as the last one was: to all of which is added a great financial loss, for having found that others in my absence had already made my business deals not in accordance with my instructions. Yet this is the least of it, for where arriving safely is at stake, everything can be borne in the end.

We departed Lisbon on the 8th of April 1583, in a convoy of five very great ships, I being embarked on the flagship *San Filippo*, the same one that turned back and brought me back to Lisbon the year before. I boarded her again because, having to cross the seas that we then found, nothing less than her sturdiness was needed; and also because, all things having to run

their risk once and have their misfortune, and all men having to make some considerable error in their work, it seemed to me that these things could have been

[1] Collated with the manuscript copies Capp. and Camb. — See note b on p. 191.

[p. 267] already past; for that ship had been lost twice on the first voyage, and our pilot had made that blunder that made me turn back, which was enough to canonize him as a fool,[1] even though he was the best on the route.

We sailed in convoy, the ships within sight of one another, for four days, and before we sighted the island of Madeira, each had already taken its own course, and we had all lost sight of one another, notwithstanding the orders, the instructions, and the commands. We, continuing on our voyage, had weather different from the usual soon enough: yet we made our way to the coast of Guinea with a reasonable passage. That coast is reckoned from 6 degrees latitude on the northern side down to the crossing of the equinoctial — a most wretched climate, because that land of Ethiopia gives off a dead calm, a thick reddish air, an oppressive heat, disconsolate rains, and a tedium that does not let a man live. In this stretch of sea, which is some 400 leagues, we spent turning and wheeling about a good 40 days; because our pilot, who last year lost the voyage by throwing himself too far to the west, whence he nearly struck those shoals on the coast of Brazil, guarding himself this year against that mishap, kept so far to the east on the opposite coast that we lost here the opportunity for good navigation.

We were already[2] getting out of this tedium, and had reached within a degree and a half of the equinoctial line; and with the prow toward the southwest and the southeast wind quite fresh, we expected to be done quickly with that annoyance — when the next morning with the sunrise we found we had made the voyage of the crab [TN: i.e., gone backward], for a

current carried us back that day and three more after it, until we returned to 5 degrees (a thing never heard of before):[3] whence at last we did set out and crossed the equinoctial, having taken, from the day we departed, a good 60 days.

We then crossed that stretch opposite the coast of Brazil with reasonable weather, and with all our precautions we were not very far[4] from those shallows, and

> [1] *Fool* [*Balordo*]. So the Capp. manuscript, and we believe also the Camb. Whichever of these words or some other it was, it was omitted by the editors.
>
> [2] *Already* [*Già*]. The *già* is from the Camb. manuscript.
>
> [3] *A thing never heard of before* [*Cosa sentita non più*]. The printed edition reads: *a thing never before heard of*.
>
> [4] *Very far* [*Gran fatto*]. The printed edition reads *molto*.

[p. 268] rounding that point with a tremendous fright,[1] we made our way to the latitude of the islands of Tristan da Cunha[2] and the Cape of Good Hope in good weather; and on this crossing,[3] where because of the fury of the wind one usually runs with two or three arm-lengths of foresail, by the mercy of God[4] we found calms that held us motionless for more than 15 days — to which were added as many more of northeast and east winds that made us lie to with sails down, so that here too we lost an enormous amount of time.

The wind wished to restore us, but it was a thing without discretion; because on the night before Saint Lawrence's Day [TN: 9 August], all at once a westerly burst upon us so furious and with the sea so high that in striking sail we were lost, because the sea caught the tip of the yardarm and held the ship so far over on her side that everyone, commending himself to God, went about settling his conscience. That particular danger passed, but

so many others followed that to recount them all would be a long cloth to weave.

I got through, after the first danger, the rest of the night well enough, because in the infernal darkness I could not make them out; and daylight, which I had desired, revealed them in such a way that from the first officer to the lowest passenger we held ourselves done for: because the ship, poorly supplied with sails, ran with four hand-spans of patched foresail that held together by dint of blows; for if, where it had begun to tear in more than one place, it had continued, the matter was settled — the sea would have swallowed us without any remedy. It was the most fearful thing to see the sea so high that the ship's castles were always well underwater, and the blows so strong that the hull of any other ship could not have held up under any circumstances:[5] and even though some ribs cracked, the water was so deep in the hold of the ship that before it could escape through the scuppers

[1] *A tremendous fright* [*Una paura delle vecchie*]. That is, a great fright, an old-fashioned fright.

[2] *Tristan da Cunha*. The Portuguese navigator who discovered those islands in 1506. This perhaps did not occur to the editors, who left the *da Cunha* blank; the Capp. manuscript writes *d'Acunia*, and the Camb. *de Cunha*.

[3] *On this crossing*. So the Camb. manuscript. The printed edition reads *in this adversity*, although a few lines earlier *traversa* [crossing] is also used.

[4] *By the mercy of God* [*La Dio misericordia*]. An adverbial form. Nor is what Castelvetro asserts true, that the loss of the preposition *per* [by] is found only before three nouns: *Tempo*, *Grazia*, *Mercé* [Time, Grace, Mercy].

[5] *Circumstances* [*Partito*]. The printed edition reads *patto* [pact].

[p. 269] made for that purpose, more kept coming in, and the ship, poorly caulked, kept on taking it in, and the men, more than half dead with fear, could not man the pumps.

What was good in this torment was that nothing broke nor was lost. We were in this peril[1] for some 40 hours. We found ourselves then to have passed the Cape of Good Hope on the 15th of August, and with that very little sail[2] we reckoned we ran at the rate of 50 leagues per day. Having passed so late made us fear we would have to take the route outside the island of San Lorenzo (a long and grievous voyage because of the illnesses that afflict the poor men), but the head-on contrary winds soon relieved us of this worry; because to this lateness were added many more days of lost time, and so we committed to the outside route.

But having reached a position due south[3] of the tip of the island of San Lorenzo, northeast winds struck us again that kept us tacking without being able to round that island for 28 days, putting our patience to the test. At last there came a wind the Portuguese call the *general* [TN: the trade wind], with which we went on our way, and we reckoned ourselves to be passing outside a small island called Diego Rodrigues [TN: modern Rodrigues Island]; for whoever makes this passage is well navigated, fleeing a chain of shoals called the Garagiai,[4] which lie between the island of San Lorenzo and this island of Diego Rodrigues: but the thing fell out such that we found ourselves upon them one evening at nightfall, and turning back, we went the whole night with the sounding lead in hand.[5]

I leave Your Lordship to consider what confidence was ours, because here in touching[6] or coming to any other harm, no hope of salvation remained, those shoals being all submerged, save for two rings of barren sand, without palm trees, without water, or any other good thing.

In the morning at sunrise we sighted one of these sandbars, which was the first land we

[1] *Peril* [*Pericolo*]. The Camb. manuscript has *travaglio* [hardship].

[2] *With that very little sail*. The adverb *così* [so, very] is missing from the printed edition.

[3] *Due south* [*A Mezzogiorno*]. The Capp. manuscript reads *tra Mezzogiorno* [between south].

[4] *Garagiai*. See note 1 on p. 262. Here the printed edition would have *Caragiai*; the Capp. manuscript *Garagiai*; and the Camb. apparently *Giragiani*.

[5] *With the sounding lead in hand* [*Col piombo in mano*]. That is, taking soundings, or, as Botta would say, plumbing the water.

[6] *In touching* [*In toccando*]. A Magliabechiana manuscript, no. 89, Class XIX, which I have also consulted, here reads *intoppando* [running aground].

[p. 270] had seen in six months. I leave Your Lordship to consider what pleasure that sight gave us; and thinking that at every moment the ship would touch and say "here I stay," we were negotiating openly with death, and as they say, in sound and clear mind, without any opportunity to make a will.

The wind was from the southeast and quite fresh, and keeping close to that sandbar which we left to windward — because reaching it at our will would free us from it — the fear remained of what could not be seen; and so we went until noon, or shortly after, when we lost the bottom; and entering a channel between these shallows and certain others called *de Nazaré*, we went on our way without finding any further obstacles but light winds and the like.

The men, who were not few, came through healthy until we crossed the equinoctial again, where the hardships and the poor treatment of the wretched soldiers prevailed over the robust constitution of these people, and in just 2 days more than two hundred fell ill.[1] The illness is a monstrous swelling of the gums, and shortly afterward of the whole face and head with such deformity that it is a monstrous sight. Then follows the

swelling[2] of the knees and the entire legs, and at first there appear, like petechiae, certain black spots which go on spreading in short order until the whole leg becomes like ink, and the joints give such excessive pain that merely to look at, let alone touch, a sick man makes one die of anguish.

The remedies are scarce, and the comfort for these sick men is a bowl of lentils, or a porridge of flour — when the purser, the clerk, and the captain (who all connive together)[3] have not gobbled them up.[4] I have considered many times how easily a captain — whom I shall describe myself — could lead a company on this voyage with the provisions that could be bought with the money the king spends for this purpose, varying the provisions and the rations, and distributing to each man what is due to him at the right time and place, without stealing half or more of it: but this thing, long established on this voyage, has no other remedy than always letting a part of these men die.

> [1] *Fell ill* [*Ne ammalorno*]. The printed edition reads *se n'andarono* [went away].
>
> [2] *Then follows the swelling* [*Segue enfiare*]. The printed edition reads *seguono a enfiare* [they go on to swell].
>
> [3] *Who all connive together* [*Che tutti si raccozzano*]. Missing from the printed edition.
>
> [4] *Gobbled them up* [*Pappate*]. The printed edition reads *mangiate* [eaten].

[p. 271] But returning to the navigation: after all these vexations, we at last entered these seas of India, so tranquil, with winds so gentle and a sky so temperate, that every past hardship seemed to me to have been well spent, because from the sight alone the whole soul is satisfied.

We sighted this coast on the 4th of November, and dropped anchor in this bay of Cochin at 10 degrees latitude on the northern side, on the 8th of November, having been at sea 215 days without seeing any other land than

that wretched sandbar — which in truth, when I think of it, seems a thing not to be believed except of a fish: and yet it is so, and the hope of being able to endure today carries us through to tomorrow, for otherwise one could not go on.

We thought that the ships of our convoy had suffered these and similar hardships; and from the first we learned that all four had reached the bay of Goa on the 20th of September, having passed without even striking sail once — a thing we had done so many times that my head was already spinning from so much turning at that capstan.

These are, in sum, the things that happened on the voyage. Of this land I can give Your Lordship little account, because in a few days one sees little of the little that the Portuguese possess here. We are now in summer: the heat is great where the sea breeze by day and the land breeze by night do not reach; and when these two winds die down, the thing is tedious.

The water is not good here, from which it follows that almost a third of these Malabar people have monstrous legs and testicles as big as a head [TN: likely elephantiasis, endemic in tropical Kerala]; and whoever can, to avoid these troubles, has drinking water brought from 5 leagues away.[1] The poor people drink from wells dug 7 arm-lengths deep; others, somewhat better off, from the river Mangate,[2] upon whose bank at the mouth this city stands.

Soil I have not yet seen here, but only sand, which is not however barren but most richly covered with palm trees of towering height of different kinds: for some produce those coconuts that not without reason we call Indian nuts, which are the income, the field, the vineyard, the olive grove, and the woodland of these people; others produce areca, which is a fruit that these

[1] *Away* [*Lontano*]. The Camb. manuscript reads *di lungi*.

[2] *Mangate*. On p. 263 it is written *Mangate*.

[p. 272] black people eat with the herb betel, not dissimilar in shape to a nutmeg; others produce dates and fruits,[1] of which, however, I have not yet seen any here. All the other plants are so different from ours that little resemblance comes to mind to make them understood.

[p. 272] Fruits[1] of various kinds, and none, in my opinion, that equals our own — and not our best ones either; nor until now have I found any that fills the palate, except the pineapple, in shape and size like a large pine cone, made and produced on its plant exactly like an artichoke. The scent of the pineapple is such that it can be smelled from the street when one is kept[2] in the room; but it is so delicate that one feels no annoyance from it: and because in this it resembles[3] nothing but itself, I would not know what to compare it to. The color is gold, tending a little toward copper. It is peeled and sliced crosswise; and when it is well ripe, it is tender, though still offering some resistance to the tooth.[4] The flavor is like that of strawberries and melon, juicy, and very pleasing to the taste, and with wine it acquires a wonderful intensity, just as among us[5] the said two fruits do — to which I prefer it. Those who attend to health say they are unwholesome, and adduce as proof that if you stick a knife in one in the evening and leave it until morning, you will find all the iron red. I, not wishing it any worse,[6] have not made this experiment. Others say it dissolves the stone in the bladder, which, if true, would be something beyond having a good smell; and I believe that it does more or less help, or provokes urine, because the juice is cleansing, and one feels a considerable vigor in it. One of these fruits costs two *basalucchi* [TN: a small Indian coin], which are one of these *ventini* [TN: a Portuguese coin of small denomination]; and one suffices for two or three moderate persons. I have

found in it so far one defect that is not small,[7] which is that of not being available all year round: as is the case with all the other fruits, which I find are worth nothing, such as certain things they call figs, I know not why.

Grapes there are none, for the land does not produce them;

[1] *Fruits* [*Frutte*]. This word is left blank in the printed edition.

[2] *One is kept* [*Se ne tiene*]. The printed edition reads *se ne tengono* [some are kept].

[3] *In this it resembles* [*In questo e' non è simile*]. So the Capp. manuscript. The printed edition reads *questo non è simile*.

[4] *Though still offering some resistance to the tooth* [*Con aspettare pure il dente*]. Or, with an easy exchange: *it does not even wait for the tooth* [i.e., it melts in the mouth]. This second reading is the common one of the printed edition; the other is in the Table of additions and corrections, and also in the manuscripts.

[5] *Among us* [*Tra noi*]. The printed edition reads *da noi*.

[6] *Worse* [*Peggio*]. The two manuscripts have *di peggio*.

[7] *That is not small* [*Che non è piccolo*]. The printed edition reads *non piccolo*.

[p. 273] nor wheat either, for it comes from Cambay [TN: the port of Khambhat in Gujarat, a major source of grain for the Malabar coast]. The common sustenance is rice and the herb betel, which they eat with lime, or with that areca I mentioned above; and they say it is very good. The herb is sharp and tends toward pepper (I mean the betel); it makes a good stomach and good breath, comforts the head, and leaves the mouth as though bloodied.

They use oxen in place[1] of mules for carrying loads, and also for carting: they are different from ours in their horns, which they have resembling goats' and turned along the line of the spine, and not spread open like ours.

Cows are slaughtered for the Christians, Moors, and Jews, and for some of the Gentiles; and they are not bad meat. The buffalo are small, like the oxen as well, and very little different; for if it were not that they are the color of a deer, they would not be recognized.

An elephant is here so tall that whoever is on the ground judges the man riding it to be very small; whence the proverb has arisen: "He looks like a Nair on an elephant." It stands by this river working, and has that good understanding they say; because at the command of that black man it goes forward and back, and picks up and puts down, and is a very obedient person[2] and a beautiful animal, for being so very ugly and misshapen; and even more handsome by a good deal is the *Bada*.[3] [TN: the rhinoceros — *abada* in Portuguese]

The men are well built, and although swarthy, do not have that snub-nosed face[4] like the Negroes of Guinea. Their garb is most sumptuous, made by that great tailor of nature, who dresses them precisely so; only a rag covers the shame in front, and that is all.

The natives of the coast (I mean the Nairs) are all Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus]. They have certain churches of theirs, which they call *Pagodi* [TN: temples], where they go to make themselves slaves of the devil. They are all a warlike people,

[1] *In place* [*In luogo*]. The printed edition reads *in cambio*.

[2] *Person* [*Persona*]. The printed edition reads *di persona* [in person/stature]. After this word both manuscripts add *e di poche parole* [and of few words].

[3] *And even more handsome by a good deal is the Bada*. In the previously cited Reggio edition, among the thirty short notes at the end of the book, one at this point reads thus: "Here the sense is corrupted, as is clearly apparent. Not being able to consult the originals, I have not ventured any correction." But to me it seems everything is perfectly in order, the meaning being that far more graceful

than such an elephant was the *Bada*, or rhinoceros: where Professor Parenti (*Esercitaz. filolog.* No. I) justly observes that the beauty of the animal consisted precisely in its deformed appearance — as one might call a cliff, a ruin, or the like beautiful, for its very horribleness.

[4] *Face* [*Viso*]. The Camb. manuscript reads *grifo* [snout].

[p. 274] and when their captain or king dies in battle, they are obliged to go and die at the will of their lord; and these men already destined to death are called *Amocchi*[1] [TN: *Amoucos* or *Amoks*, warriors sworn to die in battle for their lord — the origin of the word "amok"], and that king who has the most of them is the most powerful, because pressed in war he sends against the enemy a band of these men, however many he pleases, who, not wishing to die without revenge, and having to die at all events, make a terrible assault.

Not dissimilar to this manner of fighting, or at least to its intention, was a sacrifice that one of the Roman consuls[2] made of himself in the war against the Latins, his wing of the battle already giving way.

The reason why these men are obliged to die upon losing their captain and lord seems to be very reasonable in war, because no good soldier should see his captain die while he himself remains alive.

War among the Gentiles is in some respects[3] very similar to that of the *Compari* [TN: a traditional Florentine mock-combat tournament], because where the king's standard stands, no one strikes or wounds, and after the skirmish has been joined, at the raising of a standard they separate. Their arms are arquebuses, lances like half-pikes, longbows, and sword and buckler, without which these Nairs are never found; and they put the greatest industry into keeping them shining and clean.

[1] *Amocchi*. Serdonati, in his Italian translation of Maffei's *Histories of the East Indies*, writes *Amoci*.

[2] *One of the Roman consuls*. Whence Propertius: *Admisso Decius proelia rupit equo* [TN: "Decius broke the battle lines with his horse given free rein" — an allusion to the *devotio* of P. Decius Mus, the consul who sacrificed himself in battle against the Latins in 340 BC, as recounted by Livy].

[3] *In some respects* [*In qualche parte*]. Addition of the Camb. manuscript.

Another race of Gentiles fills the land, whom they call Brahmins [TN: Sassetti's folk etymology below is his own speculation; the name derives from Sanskrit *Brahman*, the sacred universal principle], who, although native to the country, appear as though foreigners. These are of the sect of Pythagoras, for they kill nothing, nor eat anything that undergoes death: herbs only, and fruits, and milk, and butter is their life; and wine, as being akin to blood, is shunned by them.

[p. 275] Then there also came in[1] an infinite number of Moors from Arabia[2] [TN: Muslims], the usual perverse sort, Jews and slaves of infinite nations, a great part of whom Your Lordship will have seen in Portugal; which I do not wish to repeat here for less tedium to you…. From Cochin, the [blank] of January 1584.

Most affectionate servant.

[1] *Came in* [*Sortoci*]. The printed edition reads *Eccivi* [there are also].

[2] *From Arabia* [*Passatici d'Arabia*: lit. come over to us from Arabia]. The printed edition reads *passati* [come over].

LXXXVI. To Maria Sassetti née Bartoli, in Florence. Published.

He informs her of having sent her a small gift, and gives her good advice for the children.

Most honored and dearest Sister,

I wrote to you with the first ship that departed from here, reporting my safe arrival on this coast, which I shall not repeat for less trouble to you, and also for lack of time. By the second ships that departed from here I sent to Carlo Velluti a small parcel, inside which were some pearls which, arriving safely, he will send to Francesco, to whom I have given instructions to give you 200 of them to make a two-strand necklace for Margherita; which he will do, and you shall give them to her, and let her wear them, for being small they are not unbecoming; I mean, if you were to say:[1] — we are poor, and we cannot wear pearls; — or else that other: — a garland costs a farthing, and not everyone can wear one. — So do let her wear them, since I give them to her so that she may sometimes say a decade of the rosary for her uncle when she is in church. I am sending some to our sister-in-law of the same sort, which is a meager gift: she will accept the goodwill, for at present I would not know what else to send her. To our brother Francesco I am sending a bundle of cloves, so that he may divide them among yourselves and certain others: have him give you your portion, and keep them for household use; and if for nothing else, to keep in the chest among the linen and woolen cloths, they will give a good scent.

To Roberto I send nothing but this reminder, that he be a good son, and obedient toward you: which thing becomes him all the more as he grows

older, for his own reputation and that of his sister; and because I am certain that with the years his discretion will grow, I shall not repeat anything to him. I remind him not to stray after people who do nothing, who lead young men to taverns and disreputable places, where gambling goes on and a thousand knaveries are committed, and who cause others to break their necks; and since there will be no more time to go about with a schoolmaster to look after him, he must look after himself: otherwise he would be ruined, or would fall from the grace of God and of men, and no one could help him.

I am longing to see some piece of writing from Girolamo! Have him learn arithmetic in good time, and his little primers well, for those are the most necessary thing there is for children; and do not be sparing of the odd four smacks when needed.

I have nothing more to say to you. Do not plunge yourself into that Carmignano[2] for the whole summer, for you will fall ill there; and besides you would not be doing what is best for your children: for one who has a child at the writing desk cannot stay in the country, nor can one who goes to school. Keep yourself well for their sake, and pray God for me; and tell Agnola to give me a little crumb of that chatter of hers. God grant you every consolation, and keep you. From Cochin, the 10th of February 1584.

Your most affectionate brother.

[1] *If you were to say* [*Dicessi*]: for *diceste*. The printed edition, by probable typographical error, has *dicesse*.

[2] *Carmignano*. There are two places in Tuscany bearing this name: one, now called Carmignanello, on Monte Morello; the other in the Val d'Ombrone pistoiese, on the slope of Monte Albano, 13 miles from Florence. But the Carmignano of which Sassetti speaks must be the second, because in Letter XCIV to the same sister, speaking of the small vexations that never fail those

who have a little land under the sun, he names among other things the Ombrone; a river which with its floods causes great damage, and about which, even since Sassetti's time, a Prato engineer, maestro Girolamo di Pace, had made a proposal to Cosimo I for measures of defense: which has already been partly, if not wholly, achieved, by means of the works most suited to the purpose that were begun there in 1823.

LXXXVII. To Baccio Valori, in Florence. Published.[1]

He excuses himself for not having sent him anything, owing to the scarcity of merchandise that arrived at Cochin that year; he speaks of Piero Vettori, and laments the little opportunity he had to observe, as he would have wished, the things of that country.

Most illustrious and excellent sir, my most respectful,

Last year I wrote to Your Excellency of my arrival in these parts, with the little that in little time came to mind. The ships from Portugal then arrived, and with them I received Your Lordship's dear letter, full of much joy for me and gladness at the good news given me of the male child born to you; which certainly in such need has been a particular grace, for which, after God our Lord, your house must hold itself singularly obliged to you, since the matter had been reduced to two [heirs], one of whom, and from whom most was hoped, has not yet found the way to aid it. Now the beginning is good, and if the middle and end shall correspond, it will become excellent; and since one goes a year between letters, it will not be much if with every post[2] I have this satisfaction.

I did not send anything last year to Your Lordship from those funds of yours that I brought with me, because to send you a diamond[3] or a ruby, of which more are found there than here and at a better price, was to fall into the ordinary. Last year the ship from China did not come, I know not why; whereby all the fine things were lacking, which these people call *brinchi*[4] [TN: Portuguese term for trinkets or small ornamental goods, typically Chinese; cf. the note on p. 161]. This year up to four [such ships] are expected, and reasonably there will be the opportunity to send something pleasing. Porcelain has been so lacking that one cannot find any to buy for

household use. If these ships come, which God grant (I have a few of my own funds[5] aboard them), there will be something for everyone to serve friends and patrons.

The news given me of our Signor Piero Vettori is in keeping with his age rather than with universal need, for in that regard we well understand how long he ought to live — I find I have been remiss with him for some time, having been without writing to him. I am doing so now, much in doubt whether I shall have the satisfaction of the letter reaching his hands, the subject of which is matters of these parts, which do not fail to give one much to reflect upon: and if one had the opportunity and the time to see everything in particular, it would be an infinite pleasure, and one would find scattered throughout[6] this Orient the remnants of every ancient custom. But to have to struggle with inhuman and savage beasts, and with our own people, who do not love that the greater part of these things should come back to light, causes one to forgo the desire of infinite pleasures.

The letter I am sending to Your Lordship may be shared with him or kept by yourself alone; so I shall not repeat the same things. Your Lordship will excuse my brevity, and will see in what way I may serve you. Our Signor Giovanni Buondelmonti, who by common agreement is returning home, will give Your Lordship particular news of my condition and of many other things, about which he is fully informed. May Our Lord give Your Lordship all that she desires, and keep her. From Cochin, the 27th of January 1583. [TN: Under the Florentine calendar (anno ab Incarnatione, beginning 25 March), January 1583 corresponds to January 1584 in the modern reckoning.]

Your Lordship's most affectionate servant.

[1] Collated with the Rinucc. autograph, now Magliab.

[2] *Post* [*Mano*]: here the word appears to mean *post* or *dispatch of letters*.

[3] *A diamond* [*Un diamante*]. The printed edition reads *o un diamante* [or a diamond], giving a slightly different construction.

[4] *Brinchi*. The printed edition reads simply *domandano* [ask for], omitting the word. See the note on p. 161.

[5] *Funds* [*Danari*]. In the manuscript this is abbreviated, to be understood rather as *ducats* or *scudi*.

[6] *Throughout* [*Per*]. The printed edition reads *in*.

LXXXVIII. To Piero Vettori, in Florence. Published.[1]

He adduces in part the motives and justifications for having gone to India; and then describes the situation and government of Goa, the customs, religion, language, and sciences of the natives of that country.

Most illustrious and most excellent sir, my most respectful,

The reprimand I await from Your Lordship for not having written last year I reckon so light, that I shall be more content with it than with the absolution you might grant me through some cold excuses I could offer. Of my safe arrival in this land, and of what we endured in 217 days without ever seeing anything but water, as messer Nicia used to say [TN: an allusion to the simpleton lawyer in Machiavelli's comedy *La Mandragola*, whose complaints about discomfort were proverbial in Florentine circles], I gave an account to Signor Baccio Valori. The truth is that if one were to consider this voyage very carefully before embarking — how one spends[1] 17 months on ship's biscuit and yellow water, crowded in a small space among 800 or 900 persons, falling[2] from hunger, thirst, discomfort, and ill treatment — I imagine that none or very few would wish to see India at the cost of such hardship. But such it is, that one acts like Orlando,[3] who, seeing that boat, was seized with the desire to go on the water.

I was greatly astonished at what a good man who lives in these parts told me; who, having a wife and children in Lisbon, and living comfortably, found himself one morning on the shore watching the ships departing for here; at the loosening of whose sails all the sailors, passengers, soldiers, and all the shore finally cried aloud — *bon voyage*: — at which cry that good fellow[4] felt his heart touched, opened his purse and finding therein 6 *portoghesi* [TN: Portuguese gold coins, worth approximately 90 ducats in

total], sent word home that they need not wait for him to dinner; mounted one of those ships, and came here — and that was that: for if he had had to take his leave of his wife and children and give account to his friends, or had taken even a little time to consider[5] what he was undertaking, I assure you, he would have kept putting it off.[6]

It may not perhaps seem fitting to adduce as the reason for such a thing a simple impulse and a certain tenderness: for if the end is good, the means need not appear troublesome; if weak, why embark upon it? Enough: this dispute was to have been conducted before one's departure [*altrui*[7]]; but being already in these parts, the discussion would serve only for another time, as the saying goes.

[p. 279] On the first occasion that I embarked, our pilot could not manage it, and we were forced to turn back. On the second [attempt] we came to Cochin, which is, as one might say, to miscarry of the voyage to India [TN: *sconciarsi dello andare in India* — lit. "to miscarry of going to India," meaning to fall short of the true destination, Goa]; because, although the land belongs to the Portuguese and is among the best, and the trading post is reasonable, the city of Goa is the seat of the court and the nobility, and thither in the end all the news, the goods, and the peoples of these Indies converge. Last March I departed from here for the said place, distant from this by 100 leagues, which are like 400 of our miles: and since my duties compelled me to it, I went to see the places and fortresses that the Portuguese hold on this coast between this city and that; so that in 32 days we arrived at Goa, which is a small island some [roughly][2] 12 miles in circumference.

[p. 280] The city, which is as large as Pisa, stands on the shore of the salt-water estuary that forms the said island. The inhabitants, both of that city and of the other Portuguese territories, are Portuguese[3] and Gentiles [TN:

i.e., Hindus], with some Jews and Moors [TN: Muslims] scattered among them, who live as separate from the Christians as possible. The Portuguese here are of two kinds, for either they have come from Portugal or were born in these parts; and if they were born here of Indian women, they are called *Mestiços*[4] [TN: mixed-blood; Portuguese *mestiço*, from Latin *mixtus*, mixed — the term for persons of Portuguese and Indian parentage], who are recognizable in the face, partaking of the look of this country. I do not know how one could call these people by a Latin name, being as it were a perpetual colony; nor even a colony, for those who went to populate a land were assigned house, field, forest, meadow, and every other thing, from which, through industry and labor, they could sustain themselves. But to these people none of these things; nor, however much I have reflected, can I find a fitting comparison for them other than the crumbs that remain on the tablecloth after dinner, which are shaken to the ground by whoever folds it: the servant comes, and sweeps them up and throws them among the rubbish.

Every year 2,000 or 3,000 men and boys of the most lost people there are come from Portugal: a quarter, a third, and sometimes half of them are thrown into the sea [i.e., die during the voyage]; the others, who arrive alive, are put ashore: death or knavery comes, and takes them all in, and for the most part they come to a bad end — excepting[1] some of the noble ones or someone else who, with the guidance of relatives or by his own virtue, rises[2] somehow.

The administration of justice and those who keep account of the revenues of the commune come all from Portugal, from the Viceroy down to the constable, excepting those[3] who deal with the provisioning of the local territories (whom we would call officers of supply and abundance) and the trades; and these have little authority, everything in the end referring back to the royal ministers, who, in matters of justice, although supreme, are

obeyed by some and not by others; besides which there are those who mock them, offend them, and ill-treat them in their very office:

[1] Collated with the Rinucc. original, now Magliab., which if not autograph would appear to be that very document written at Cochin, with Sassetti dictating, as he sometimes did; I nonetheless also checked the Magliab. MS. 59 of class XIII, Riccard. 1826, and the Carabiagi codex.

[1] *One spends* [*Si stanno*]. The printed edition reads *si sta*.

[2] *Falling* [*Cascasi*]. The printed edition reads *e cascasi*. The other manuscripts have variously *cascate*, *cascati*, *cascanti*.

[3] *Like Orlando*. *Orlando Furioso*, Canto IX, stanza 9.

[4] *That good fellow* [*Quello uomo buono*]. The printed edition reads *quel buon uomo*.

[5] *A little time to consider* [*E' si fusse preso tempo a considerare*]. The Camb. manuscript reads *e' si fussi posto a considerare*.

[6] *He would have kept putting it off* [*Egli infornava domane*]: literally "he would be baking tomorrow" — a colloquial Florentine expression meaning he would perpetually delay and never depart.

[7] *One's departure* [*Altrui*]. So all the manuscripts. The printed edition reads *altri*.

[2] *Some* [*Cosa*]: here meaning approximately. The printed edition reads *circa*.

[3] The first *Portoghesi* does not appear in the printed edition.

[4] *Mestiços*. That is, mixed. Francesco Carletti, in his *Travels*, writing of women, uses the form *Mestrizze*.

[1] *Excepting* [*Tirandone*]. The printed edition reads *eccettuandone*. The Riccardiana manuscript: *traendone*.

[2] *Rises* [*Emerge*]. The printed edition reads *si solleva*.

[3] *Excepting those* [*Fuori a quelli*]. The printed edition reads *fuori di quelli*.

[p. 281] As happened to a doctor of law, who, sent by the Viceroy to Malacca to hold an inquiry into the captain of that fortress — the people he governed having complained of him — the good captain,[4] having seized the auditor, had him shaved in the style of a buffoon, and the shaved part he had smeared with dung, without any further action being taken — because the noble men make justice and other good things that in republics are accustomed to hold the chief place tremble. But of this I have no time now.

The Gentiles who live in the Portuguese settlements proper are few, and therefore of them and their life and customs little can be said, for they do not even live in their own way. Those who live on the mainland are of different races, varied in language, in customs, and in religion, and in every one of their actions; and a good part of them have no permanent abode, but live today here and tomorrow 100 leagues away, wherever their fickleness calls them.

They were formerly lords of all these parts; but having little by little allowed the Moors into their countries, they have lost dominion over them, for those dogs have usurped it, and from free men they have become almost everywhere slaves; for few places are ruled by Gentiles. Whence perhaps it comes that a great part of them are wanderers, as has been said; and among all, the most itinerant are a race they call Brahmins, whom Pliny mentioned, who,

> [4] *The good captain* [*Il buono del capitano*]. The printed edition reads *il buon capitano*. [TN: Sassetti's phrasing is ironic — "the fine fellow of a captain."]

[p. 282] treating of these eastern peoples, says: *audio complures eorum vocari Bracmenes* [TN: "I hear that many of them are called Brahmins"]; who are reputed by all to be the noblest and the best and the most intelligent of all the rest; whence by the other peoples they are esteemed, and outwardly revered and well treated. And their name[1] is a compound,

and the first part, *Bra*, in their ancient language signifies God, and the second, *mene*, to speculate [TN: Sassetti's etymology is his own speculation; *Brahmin* in fact derives from Sanskrit *Brahman*, the sacred universal principle or sacred knowledge]; so that altogether we might call them theologians. It is true that in their temples none are appointed as priests except men of this kind.

They are all of the quickest intellect, and of bodily strength so feeble that a reed is stiffer: and in them that saying is verified: *molles carne apti mente* [TN: "soft in flesh, fit in mind"]. They are all much given to the vice of lust, and[2] the Brahmins are the more continent; and toward this virtue of temperance their life is particularly directed, which ought to be far more austere than that of the Capuchins; because those among them of the strictest life eat no meat nor anything that has feeling, or that bears resemblance to a sentient thing. They do not drink wine, nor willingly hear it spoken of; and all this is (as a physician of this sect was telling me) directed toward not disturbing with excessive food and drink their speculation — although this has since passed into a superstition so terrible that, considering their practices, they seem fabulous things or dreams. For from not eating meat for the reason stated above, to buying back the lives of animals that the Christians and Moors kill, to maintaining a hospital for sick birds and other beasts, to setting free captured birds, to consuming many bales of rice every year in their houses so that the mice may not merely live on it but revel in it — the distance is so great that one[3] cannot but marvel.

Their sustenance is rice, fruits of the earth, milk, butter, and water, nothing more. They cannot sit down to eat — rice in particular — without first washing the entire body. And whereas in ancient times they washed for pleasure, these people, who perhaps began for another purpose, have reduced it to superstition, for they would sooner let themselves die of

hunger and thirst than sit down to table unwashed. And as among themselves they are differentiated in religion and in nobility, the more noble neither eat

> [1] *And their name* [*Et il nome*]. The printed edition reads *e del nome* [and of the name]. Perhaps it should read: *è il nome*, etc. [the name is…].
>
> [2] *And* [*Et*]. The printed edition reads *anche* [also].
>
> [3] *One* [*Altrui*]. The printed edition reads *altri*.

[p. 283] nor drink anything that has been touched by the less noble, on pain of being reputed infamous. Their little-observed precepts are moral and good, and often proffered by them as a demonstration of virtue.

It seems to me we may say that it is an illness of this century that in all parts of the world the sciences are in a language different from that which is spoken; and this malady has afflicted these people as well,[1] because their language is so different from that in which their science resides that they spend 6 years learning it — although they do not do as the Hebrews, who teach the language of the laws to their children as we teach parrots to talk; rather, these people have a grammar, and they use it.

The language in itself is delightful and of beautiful sound, on account of the many elements they have, up to 53;[2] of all of which they give an account, deriving them all from the various movements of the mouth and the tongue. They translate into their language with ease all our concepts, and they believe that we cannot do the same with theirs in our language, for want of half the elements, or more. And it is true that to pronounce their words with their sounds and accents (which is what they mean) is very difficult; and I believe the cause is in great part the different temperament of the tongue, because these people, eating at every hour that leaf of such excellent herb that they call *betel*, which is astringent and desiccating in

great measure, together with that fruit they call *areca*, which was anciently called the *avellana indica* [TN: "Indian hazelnut"], and with lime all mixed together, consequently have the tongue and the mouth dry and nimble, and we the contrary.

Their sciences, and the moral ones in particular, are collected in verses composed of maxims; and between the moral and the precepts of their law, or, as we would say, of their theology, there is no difference, for everything is mixed together.

Of mathematics I see that among them there are

> [1] *As well* [*Tambene*]. The printed edition reads *ancora a*.
>
> [2] This is the much-celebrated Sanskrit language, otherwise *sanscruta* or *sancruta*, that is, *well articulated*, regarded by many as the root of all European languages: which, according to Sassetti, is written with 53 characters, according to others with 52 or 48, besides several thousand signs of syllabic abbreviation. In form and vocabulary it would appear to have some resemblance to Zend, Persian, Greek, Latin, ancient Teutonic or German, Gothic, and Icelandic; but when it was spoken, no record is found. Whoever has six or seven years to throw away to learn it may avail himself, among other works, of the critical grammar of Franz Bopp, reprinted in Berlin in 1845.

[p. 284] great men, nearly all these people going about with the revolutions of the year in their breast;[1] and in the principles of astrology there is no difference between them and us, for the Arabs must have taught it to them; or rather (as seems more likely[2] to me, since these people say they have copper tablets engraved with records of so many thousands of years that, if our religion did not reject them as false, they would be marvelous for their antiquity) it was from them that it spread throughout this Orient.

> [1] *With the revolutions of the year in their breast* [*Con le revoluzioni dell'anno in seno*]. That is, carrying astronomical knowledge intimately within them.

[2] *As seems more likely* [*Come verisimile*]. [TN: Sassetti is here remarkably suggesting that Indian science may have predated and given rise to Arab science, rather than the reverse — an observation strikingly ahead of its time.]

As for philosophy,[3] we may, as Alfonso used to say [TN: almost certainly Alfonso X of Castile ("Alfonso the Wise," 1221–1284), the philosopher-king whose sardonic quips on learning were proverbial in the Renaissance], say that they carry it bareback; or like a little peasant who, when asked by a Dominican father if he knew the Creed, replied that he knew a bit of it here and a bit of it there; for since they have to learn the arts and sciences by sayings and maxims, this means not learning them by their proper principles. They have knowledge of Aristotle and of Galen and of Avicenna, but confusedly — as is natural for those sciences to have been translated from one language to another twice, and into Arabic with little success. They reason poorly about matter and form, and in a disorderly fashion: and when they hear a little discourse that has a head and feet and proceeds with distinction, they are amazed.

Their religion, I tell Your Lordship, is a thing to seek to understand[4] in order to laugh at their vanity: because, although they never mention anything other than God, who is in heaven, who does all things, incorporeal, one alone, and eternal — to then see their follies in their temples is a thing to laugh at. In the first place, all the Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus] of these parts, even though hundreds of leagues distant, different in language and customs, insofar as in touching[5] one another they hold themselves defiled, all converge upon a single temple and all worship a single idol: and these idols are a hundred thousand[6] millions.

And although I have many times sought to see their altars and what these idols of theirs, which they call *Pagodi*, may be, I have not managed to see them with any convenience until now — when, coming from Goa on the way to Cochin, we went ashore at

[3] *Philosophy*. The Magliabechiana and Riccardiana manuscripts add *e medicina* [and medicine].

[4] *To seek to understand* [*Da cercarla d'intenderla*]. The printed edition reads *da cercar d'intenderla*.

[5] *In touching* [*In toccandosi*]. The printed edition reads *imboccandosi* [literally: putting in the mouth].

[6] *A hundred thousand* [*Centomila*]. The printed edition reads *cento migliaia*.

[p. 285] a Portuguese fortress they call Bazalir [TN: likely Basselore/ Basrur, a Portuguese fort on the Malabar coast], near which, at a league's distance, is a city of the Gentiles — the finest I have yet seen of theirs in these parts — where they have a very large *Pagode* [TN: temple], to which all the Gentiles of these parts resort.

The form of the temple is fantastic, and to describe it one would need to stay there longer than I could. The idols are two, in two different chapels: one could not be seen, for it had the larger chamber and stood in there in the dark; but the door of the chapel was flanked by two brass statues, life-sized, made without or with very little artistry, both representing the same thing, or very nearly.

One had 7 arms: 4 on the right side dividing into 4 branches from the elbow forward, and 3 on the left in the same manner, and in each hand it held some object. I shall describe some of them, because there was no place for writing, nor for lingering much, having little time and much to see. It had in one of its right hands one of those serpents they call *cobra di capelo* [TN: the cobra, so named for the hood — Portuguese *cobra de capelo*], which raises above its head, when aroused, something like a mane; in another an axe, in another a rod; in one of the left hands a hammer; and it seemed to me there were meant to be a whip and other instruments.

The other statue, which was on the left side of the door, had only 6 arms, three extending from each elbow, like the other above; but from this one, one arm emerged from the chest, and in each hand it held some of the same things in part, and in part different, for this one had a mirror in one hand. I also[1] seem to recall that the Greeks depicted Apollo with multiple arms and with great significances.

What these wretches mean to convey with these images of theirs, I do not know: in the rest of their person and dress they have much to do with Mercury, having little caps of their own, but without winged sandals. It may be that I shall fish it out from some of these Gentiles.

The other idol, which stood in the chapel opposite this one, is a cow lying in the act of chewing the cud, with a little calf beside it and nothing more: whence it seems to me one may gather that the superstition of these people is a composition of the religion of the Egyptians, who were in this frenzy of worshipping their Isis

> [1] *Also* [*Tambene*]. The printed edition reads *come* [as].

[p. 286] in the form of a cow, and many other animals, and of the Asiatic peoples who were near to Europe.

Their priests are from these Brahmins, learned in their law, some of whom, whom they call *Gioghi* [TN: *yogis*],[1] go seeking their infernal martyrdom in different ways. They live always naked in the forest, eating herbs: they go on very long pilgrimages to the *Pagodi* of other lands; others lie buried in ashes in the most scorching sun; others, having vowed to deflower 2,000 or 3,000 maidens, go about performing this charity, for which they are held in great veneration, such that a company walks before them clearing the people out of the way — perhaps in imitation of that *procul, o procul* [TN: *procul, o procul este, profani* — "far off, far off, ye uninitiated!" The cry

before the sacred rites of the underworld: Virgil, *Aeneid* VI.258].

And in a certain land there is a *Pagode* expressly for this purpose of deflowering maidens, made of stone with the equipment in order, where they place the maiden in position, and the priest gives her a knock from behind, so that the business is done; and for those who are far away and cannot come to this *Pagode*, those charitable pilgrims are perhaps ordained.

But returning to the priests: among them there are soothsayers, particularly on the mainland. Near Goa there is one to whom the Gentiles of Goa resort to learn when the ships from Portugal will arrive, how many, and what goods will be in demand: and not only the Gentiles pay him attention, but many of our own people melt with delight when they hear some lie about the future. What pleased me was what I learned of him this year — that before he answers he wishes to be worshipped; and then, after[2] having performed certain ceremonies of his, in the act of answering they say he trembles horribly. But everyone perhaps, *si pectore posset* [TN: "if his heart could allow it" — Virgilian in phrasing; precise locus unverified], goes about in his divining helping himself[3] with generalities and contingencies that commonly can and usually do happen, as must always have been the case.

I do not think I should pass over in silence some of the outward acts they perform in their temples. They paint, first of all, their faces in different ways; for where the eyebrows meet they make a mark with sandalwood powder mixed with water, in this manner [TN: Sassetti apparently sketched the mark in the original manuscript], the said mark coming up along the nose; and in the middle they make a rosette with our saffron, if they can; if not, with a certain other kind from the land, and upon

[1] *Gioghi*. In the histories of the Indies by Maffei, translated by Serdonati, it is written *Giogui*; in a short work by Redi, *Iogui*.

[2] *Then, after* [*Poi di*]. The printed edition reads *dopo*.

[3] *Helping himself* [*Aiutando*]. The printed edition reads *aiutandosi*.

[p. 287] that rosette they stick four or five grains of rice. The rest of the face and head down to the neck, the chest, and the arms — they smear it all over with the same sandalwood powder mixed with plain water (for the poor) or with scented water (for the rich), so that to see them they look like the very devil incarnate.

Having entered the temple, their faces painted in this fashion, there stands a flat brass basin that serves them as a mirror, where they look *satis venuste* [TN: "prettily enough"], and if anything is amiss, they apply more. They ring a little bell that hangs there low.

Thus, without entering inside, under a portico one man stood making his prayers (which they call performing *sambaja*) [TN: a form of reverential prostration or obeisance; the word may derive from a Dravidian or Sanskrit devotional term — exact etymology uncertain], and he was positioned in the following manner: he was stretched out on a low wall with his belly and face to the ground, and the tips of his two big toes supported the entire leg; with his arms he reached beyond his head, and held extended and joined together the two index fingers, the others curled up; and in this manner we found him, and so we left him.

But to recount their superstitious practices would require much time. I saw in Portugal, in French, a history by one André Thevet [TN: the French cosmographer and royal chronicler, author of *La Cosmographie universelle* (1575)], who explored these parts by command of his king, in which these things were well detailed: so it would also be superfluous to say more, especially to one who sees and reads everything, as Your Lordship does.

Taking my leave, I shall tell Your Lordship that I have found this climate

not contrary to my constitution, although there are certain illnesses particular to the country that visit nearly everyone, such as the swelling of the legs and the testicles in a disfiguring manner; from which ailment I was somewhat touched in Goa this past winter, though one recovers quickly with good regimen and light remedy. For the rest, the temper of the sky is most bearable, although in these four months to come — February, March, April, and May — what our poet said comes to pass: that cold bread is worth much to us and the hot costs us nothing;[2] and, as messer Giovanni Berti used to say, there is far more thirst than wool [TN: Sassetti plays on the Italian homonyms *sete* (thirst / silk) and *lane* (wools): in these hot months one needs silk rather than wool, and thirsts far more than one shivers]. But the other four months that follow, with their moisture, restore the drought, bringing unbroken and immeasurable rain.

[p. 288] My messer Giovanni Buondelmonti, who is returning with this fleet, will give Your Lordship more particular news of these parts. God willing, I shall be able to do the same — greatly desired by me, in order to come and serve Your Lordship, whose news I shall await with great longing, praying God to send me such as I could wish. From this city of Santa Cruz de Cochin [TN: Santa Cruz de Cochim was the Portuguese name for Cochin], the 27th of January 1585.

Your most illustrious Lordship's most affectionate servant.

> [2] *Cold bread is worth much to us and the hot costs us nothing*. In the Novella 60 of Boccaccio, Friar Cipolla uses these very words to gull the simpletons of Certaldo: "In those lands the year's summer bread is worth four *denari*, and the hot costs nothing." The same saying is found with little variation on pp. 160–161, and in Letter XCVI. [TN: In the Riccardiana manuscript, at the foot of this letter, the following note is added: "Note that the year must be taken from the Nativity, because the January just past, which according to Florentine usage was of the year '85, the letter had arrived" — that is, the date should be understood in the modern reckoning, not the Florentine style *ab Incarnatione*.]

LXXXIX. To Francesco Valori, in Florence. Published.

He gives occasion to various jests about some of their friendly and domestic affairs, and in part recounts the customary sea voyage made from Cochin to Goa along the Malabar coast; and mentions the return to Europe of Giovanni Buondelmonti.

Most magnificent sir, my most respectful,

In India one writes just exactly as you have done this time with your "Most Illustrious etc.": please hold onto it for me here, because since the thing between us cannot rise to "Most Serene," I would not want us to go backward for the sake of varying; for on the appearance of your letter and that of that poor fellow, I took good hope from that superscription, and went about arguing that if in my own subscription the title were to grow by the right degree and become also a little grander than it is — as one might say simply FILIPPO etc. — I would be altogether set up. But let us drop this.

Your letter is a chronicle, and at the beginning differs from that of Ruggieri [TN: probably a well-known Florentine death register or chronicle — the specific "Ruggieri" is unidentified, but Sassetti's point is clear: Valori's letter is full of obituaries] only in manner, the subject being entirely the same. People dead in good number. You might at least have given me in exchange so many births, so that I might not argue that you had all come to the end of the world.

Giorgio Bartoli [TN: a Florentine man of letters and friend of Sassetti's circle] had very little to do, or in good faith showed little charity: although if he did leave off pestering those works there at the wall, he would have

done wisely; but perhaps he waited for it to be finished, judicious and loving as he was. It seems to me he must have thought himself obliged to the consolation of a lecture, and to escape it by a side door, he went and died: God forgive him, for he was not a bad man, and I thought, if I ever returned home, that I would have had to spend a great deal of time telling him these little tales, since he was not much given to believing marvels that are told, except by certain persons who said they had seen them with their own eyes.

I have gone through your letter looking for news of you; and, as if you had forgotten it, you put it at the end, and what is there is little and tersely stated. Of the second little girl, *ne verbum quidem* [TN: "not a word" — Latin]. Being at the shop is perhaps to be gathered from all this, because if it were not for the little girls, God knows if we would want all this toil, eh? Of your business matters I hear well enough from others, for you, being experienced, tell me nothing of them: and so if profit follows from your toil, it will all be well employed. You must soon come to a settlement of accounts, in which I am certain your superiors and kinsmen will show your person the regard that is fitting, for I already hear of you in the marketplace as a substantial merchant. Should it prove necessary, remember that fecklessness at the desk does not work the way it does in bed — and give me a few particulars of these things, which will be most welcome.

[p. 289] Here I tell you that Federigo[1] would find lodgings to his liking for the cure of that abominable complaint of chilblains; for although the cold is not much felt here, there is no epidemic of swollen hands. You see I was confusing things; I mean the climate here is good for those who suffer from chilblains on the hands, and disagreeable for those who suffer from them on the feet, because I do not know what the devil it may be, but the greater part of people here develop the finest swellings in the world; and if these people of Malabar were very much given to luxury, they would need to do

as is done for the castrati of Hormuz [TN: Hormuz, the Persian Gulf entrepôt — Sassetti alludes to a scabrous anecdote about eunuchs kept at that court] and those parts, where they put a little pad beneath the tail so that they can move: so large do they keep it. There is also another enlargement of no small consideration, which are the [illegible in source]; for if everywhere they are large, here they are like the balls used in the game of *bracciale* [TN: a Florentine ball game played with a wooden gauntlet, using a large rubber ball]. In Goa this past winter nature wished to bestow this favor upon me, but I thanked her for it a thousand times [*milvezes*[2]: Portuguese, *mil vezes*] and declined. On arriving here, the other civility of Bastian Guidotti [TN: unidentified; perhaps a physician or factor in Cochin] wished to pay me a visit: I said there was no need, that I took it as already received, and so we let it pass, and now I have nothing more to do with such matters; and although the climate is good, one must not trifle with it, for one of these civilities would fasten itself upon one and then prove without remedy.

But returning to that matter of Lorenzo, I would ask you to kiss his hands on my behalf, and let him know that I desire to serve him.

The news about Signor Giovanni I cannot quite make sense of: I was picturing him at Fiesole contending with both eyes and poetry, when you come out at me with the King of Poland and embassies [TN: Stefan Bathory (1533–1586), King of Poland from 1576, was an active figure in European diplomacy in this period; Sassetti seems to have learned of some diplomatic or commercial mission involving a friend]; and all put together, it seems to me that mixture of the canker and the Ember Days, and not very unlike the notions of that other fellow, who, on the point of crossing to Seville on business, goes about treating of going as ambassador to Prester John.[3]

[p. 290] I do not know what to say: if this sort of thing is the fashion, there is no call to marvel; but they will tell me: O thou, *quae pars est* [TN: "what standing have you in this?" — a self-mocking Latin jibe]? Is going off to India consistent with the rest of your life? Come now, do not reproach me for it any more, for the love of God.

But returning to that poet: I have seen some of his newly made madrigals, and since the subjects have risen greatly and are beyond my understanding, I can only admire those stanzas and great poems, which I tell you I would have been glad to see; and still more gladly would I have heard that he had applied himself to that with all his force, as he had promised me. But he behaves toward me like that cat, which, walking across the laid table, caused no disorder whatsoever, but a mouse happening to cross, sent the glasses and dishes and everything flying. You have taken your hands off him, so he goes the wrong way; and a good shaking is no longer possible, and we are very far away; and to crown it all, madonna Cammina [TN: unidentified; apparently a woman of the circle who had kept a watchful eye on the poet in question], who kept a little watch over him, has gone and died. I gather that this fellow without Canigiani comes to nothing.

Now I should like to give you a brief account of my own affairs, but it must be short. Last year, after the departure of the ships for the kingdom, I went to Goa, where the Viceroy resides, and there I spent that winter — that is to say May, June, July, August, and September — at the end of which the ships at last began to come in, and at the calends of December[4] I came back here to dispatch this fleet, as to my charge; which done, I must however return to Goa once more. It is 100 leagues by sea, made with great toil and hardship, and in particular aboard a *fusta* [TN: a light oared galley used for coastal navigation], where every hour I add a white hair to my beard, since my head is already all white. The journey from here to there takes 30 days, or thereabouts; and if I told you it would seem less labor to embark for

Portugal, believe me.

My business would have gone well, had misfortune not meddled with it; for wishing to do as men do, I bought in Goa some 9 or 10 [sum illegible in source] worth of merchandise to pay at the ships, and the venture cost me [sum illegible in source]; though the commissions will reimburse it, with God's help.

[p. 291] As for my return there, I cannot speak of it for now, for, as you see, the man has barely arrived: but so that you may be content in all things, we have resolved that Signor Giovanni shall return, and so he comes with this fleet, and sails aboard the carrack *Carangiel*, called the *Bom Jesus* [TN: Portuguese, "the Good Jesus" — a name common to several Portuguese carracks of the period]. May Our Lord bring him safely. In due time you will hear from him particular news of these parts: referring you to him for the rest, I shall be no longer with this letter. Remember to love me as I do you, and pray God for me, saluting all in my name: may Our Lord God give you every good, and free you from evil. From Cochin, the 27th of January 1585.

Your Lordship's most affectionate servant.

[1] *Federigo*. Federigo Strozzi; the one prone to chilblains [*pedignonevole*], as Valori writes on p. 87.

[2] *Milvezes*. A thousand times [Portuguese: *mil vezes*].

[3] *Prester John*. The Persians call *Prester Kan*, meaning Prince of the Worshippers (and we say Prester John), the king of that part of the Indies bordering on Tartary, as Ludolf writes in the Ethiopian Histories. Our common people then made of him *Prete Giovanni* or *Gianni*, by their natural tendency (as Perticari observes) to draw words unknown to them toward the sound of ones they know.

[4] *Calends of December* [*Calen di*]. Or perhaps better *calendì*, conforming to the

well-known observation of Professor Parenti.

XC. To Maria Sassetti née Bartoli, in Florence. Published.

He replies with merry quips to one of her letters of counsel, speaking of various domestic and family matters.

Most honored and dearest Sister,

Here I am to you, lest you then say: — that fellow fobs me off with generalities, now that he has satisfied his desire to go to India; — and although I have already written you one letter, I write you another in response to yours which you sent me with the last ships that came here, in which you go about helping yourself as best you can in giving me instructions and good reminders. I do not know how I shall be able to make capital of them as I ought.

And as for loading on my back only those burdens I can carry: if I did it your way, I would be nicely set up, for every time I have tested myself, I find I can carry a sack full of grain, as well as any one of your Bechi [TN: a Florentine family proverbially associated with physical labor and strength]. See there whether you would have got me nicely ready for the festival day. This is as regards the body: as for the soul, it carries no other burden but my sins, to tell you the truth, which are more than they should be; but what is one to do? May Our Lord enlighten us, He who can.

[p. 292] If things there with you go quite quietly, I am glad of it: it seems to me you mean to convey that each person minds their own affairs. Madonna Nera at the Scaglia [TN: a Sassetti family property], you at Carmignano, and Francesco at the Mulinaccio [TN: another family property]; and so with seeing little of one another you manage not to weary each other, and

thus you keep the peace. I, if I must tell you the plain truth, praise you for it, seeing that poverty quickly breeds matter for dispute; whereas when people have not seen each other for a while, the first time they meet they at least give each other a little warm welcome. And as for Francesco, since the uncle sought to have his due by way of reason, no wrong was done to him; and that is how accounts are settled. Our Velluti cousins have always shown us great affection; and rightly so, for until my departure no ill had come to them from us, and Francesco should have taken care not to harm them where they have done him pleasure.

I look forward with the first post to hearing that we have had a little nephew. It pleases me what you say, that the sister-in-law is in good cheer: and as for the gowns trimmed with gold, that must be the fashion. What will you do? We grow old, and these whims go out of our heads. Think what you would say to see me in a satin coat, and all the rest of my dress in silk (poor silkworms! eh?)[1] — a chain about my neck, and I almost said a medallion in my straw hat, which has a red or green veil around it: what do you say to that now? Absurdity there is for everyone. Sometimes it is quite good not always to be fussing like a nurse; and if you would sometimes condescend to be a little more like other people, natures would get on better and one could say what needs to be said; but we are all of ill stock. Now the matter is that little Maddalena should grow up and take after her grandmother, so that she may bring contentment to the household.

[p. 293] Your brood was growing, you say, with little provision. And what other provision can there be but the mother and two sons who will be at the shop and earn something for their little sister, so as to marry her off when the time comes? This you must remind Roberto, and tell him to be good in deeds and not in words, and to be obedient toward you, and not drive you to despair;

[1] *Poor silkworms! eh?* A facetious exclamation addressed to the silkworms, as if commiserating with them for having endured so much labor to prepare the silk so that he — such a great big fellow, and unused to such finery — might dress himself in it so pompously. Whoever sides with a celebrated lexicographer [TN: Gherardini, in his *Supplemento a' Vocabolari italiani* (Milan, 1852), under the entry *Baco* §22] who would interpret these *poveri bachi* as *poveri minchioni* [poor fools] should have attended the solemn assembly of the Accademia della Crusca on the 28th of September of last year, and heard how the distinguished Giuseppe Arcangeli discussed it in his fine report on the Academy's labors, in which, touching on the injustice of old and modern critics of the *Vocabolario*, he wisely observed that no diligence can ever suffice in so arduous and lengthy a work to guard against even the grossest blunders.

[p. 294] for, if I must tell you the truth, a certain tale of his reached me all the way to India that did not please me, about the little respect he shows you. You are a little mama all tenderness: something more is needed, I tell you.

It pleases me that he was at the writing desk of Francesco Franceschi and of Giuliani, who are two honest men, friends of mine; and there he can learn as much as he wishes. Let him continue to keep his head on straight, for that is what matters; and that your money has earned little, I do not marvel: thank God it has not been lost, for the times have been worse for that than for anything.

Of Girolamo I hear neither of writing nor of reading; the little rascal must surely be big by now. Show them affection, but in such a way that they know you for their mother, without whom they would have been nothing.

Messer Giovanni Buondelmonti is returning with these ships: may it please God to bring him safely. He will give you news of my well-being. And already we are beginning to come back, so there is no need for you to remind me; and the reason of reminding me that I was born in Florence is not a good one, for if of two things one suffices, that is enough. If you were

to tell me: “In Florence one does not die” — now *that* would make me come back at a trot. Come, let us make an end.

Madonna Nannina del Nero has now risen in the world with Cardinals, and must no longer speak to private persons. If it happens that you find yourself with her, commend me to her, to our aunt-nuns, and to madonna Ginevra, and to you; and may God content and keep you. From Cochin, the 27th of January 1585.

Most affectionate brother.

XCI. To Lorenzo Canigiani, in Florence. Unpublished.[1]

He describes the dress of the Indians, their dwellings, their household goods, the various classes of the people, and the liberty of the women.

Most Magnificent Sir, my most honored,

Oh! I did treat you well last year in giving you the most detailed account of our voyage! Do not com-

> [1] Manuscript copy in the Magliabechiana, Class XXXVII, Cod. 209.

[p. 295] -plain, because one could not say to you what that good woman said to her backside: "You are right." I do not know how it will go this year, because I see a sorry prospect of writing to you at length: little time, much laziness or rather sloth, a great deal of business, and a tired hand. Now you will see from all this what a fine thing it would be to discourse about my affairs.

In the letter I wrote you last year, I said that that was as for the voyage, and that as for the sojourn, we would see each other again at Campoli.[1] Now I understand from your letter that your having come closer to it has entirely killed your desire to go there, since not even that globe[2] could draw you to it; and one might almost say it is the stars' fault that I have no desire to go there. But let it pass.

We came, as a Lombard would say, to those *scompigliabili* [TN: a humorous nonce-word: "unravelable messes"]; and whether we plunged or wrapped ourselves up in them, God knows for me. Signor Giovanni[3] says he means to tell it everywhere and to everyone — that the collar is of thicker cloth than the body itself, at his own pleasure.

The other garments are in proportion: taffeta, breeches, straw hat, and parasol — there you have an *Indiatico* [TN: a Europeanized India hand — a Portuguese man who has adopted Indian dress and habits] dressed. To dress an Indian requires far less workmanship, because in the morning when they rise they rub their eyes once, and they are handsomely dressed for the most part; though there are some who wear certain long gowns of theirs, also of fine cotton cloth, turbans on their heads (though not very large), and that's that.[4]

Their dwellings are in some places better and in others worse: better as in this residence of Cochin, where there are indeed most beautiful[5] palaces and fine dwellings. Oh! what fine perspectives and architecture! And the good thing is they are almost all of one design, rather like the balconied houses of Santa Croce[6]

[1] *Campoli*. In the Val di Pesa in Tuscany.

[2] *Globe*. That is, the celestial globe; for which see Letter CI, at the end.

[3] Giovanni Buondelmonti.

[4] *And that's that* [*E passa*]. Used adverbially, as if to say: and that's it; enough.

[5] *Most beautiful* [*Bellettissimi*]. Either a whim of the writer, or a blunder of the copyist for *bellissimi*. The same is to be said of the *improperative* just above [for *prospettive*, perspectives].

[6] *Santa Croce*. The houses that surround the piazza on the north side can still be seen today with all their projecting upper stories. And since here there is allusion to the beauty of the site and the game that was played there, I refer to Bocchi in his *Beauties of the City of Florence*: "Piazza Santa Croce is so called from the magnificent church that one sees at its head toward the east. This piazza is most beautiful on account of the houses that flank it with their…"

[p. 296] which make that fine sight when the football [TN: *calcio*, the traditional Florentine ball game] is played and the windows are full of

beautiful women.

But let us come to some particulars. Whoever wants to build a house there that has any form, first digs down until he begins to find water, and there makes the first walkway and the last on the front side. Where the wall is to be raised, they set up certain pieces of cane they call *bambù*, doubled one upon the other: they throw in earth, sand, leaves, and such durable material; they go up as high as God knows, so that standing some two and a half arm-lengths above the ground, they put on the roof of palm leaves.

The door is a sort of hole, and across it is a pole placed so that one can neither jump over it nor pass under it. On the back side, since it usually faces the river and there is no road, the wall is not made with the same care as on the front and sides. The windows, on account of the breeze, have shutters on them, but they are walled up.

The household furnishings are a cauldron and a sort of wooden basin, where they eat their *arroz* [TN: Portuguese for rice], or as you would say, their rice.

The principal inhabitants are, with two or three of these wretches, as many of those gentle little creatures that kiss[1] one on the mouth [TN: Marcucci, in footnote 1 below, declines to identify these creatures — "let others guess." Context suggests insects of the domestic variety.]. There is no table: tableware[2] is what ruins them, because as soon as they have eaten out of it once, they throw it away immediately. Consider, even if they were of the sort from Montelupo[3] [TN: Montelupo Fiorentino, famous for its pottery and majolica], how long they would last; but since here the matter is of eating entirely out of porcelain, you should not form so low an opinion. Perhaps they are made by a poor craftsman — by nature, that is — being big leaves of a certain plant they call

[1] *Kiss* [*Basa*]. Perhaps an error for *bava* [drool], or rather *baciano* [kiss], by proper grammatical rules. As for the rest, let others guess who these *gentle little creatures* are.

[2] *Tableware* [*Tavola*]. The manuscript has *tota*, by the usual carelessness of the copyist.

[3] *Montelupo*. Its pitchers in particular are so famous that Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger, among his unpublished writings, left the following riddle about them: "I have wings at my mouth: / I am born of a wolf, yet am no animal: / I have something divine and am an earthly thing; / And am the comfort of every heart in pain."

[p. 297] figs.[1] There you have their life as regards their dwelling, dress, and food.

This race that is native to this place (there are many foreigners — Jews, Moors, and as many Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus]) consists of different sorts: for there is a caste very low indeed, whom they call *polias* [TN: *pulayar*, the lowest-ranking caste in the Kerala social hierarchy], who are as it were infamous. From these one rises to the fisherman, then comes the artisan, and finally the gentleman, who is called Nair, whose life is arms. And they never mingle with one another in any way, each keeping to himself. The *polias* gives way in the road to the fisherman; the fisherman to the artisan, and the artisan to the Nair; and if a superior touches one of a lower caste, he immediately becomes *polias*.

Their women are seldom seen, but their situation is a sweet thing, because without breaking their law they satisfy all their desires: they are married very young, and perhaps for this reason the first man who makes her a woman must be paid — and he must generally be of the best caste. Whoever has money enough and can spend 700 or 800 or 1,000 *fanões* [TN: the *fanam*, a small gold coin of the Malabar coast], of which [number missing][2] go to a *real*, has her sleep with the king; whoever cannot afford

so much, with his governor; and whoever less, with a Brahmin.

And last year, going from here to Goa with the *regidor* [TN: Portuguese: governor or magistrate] of this king of Cochin, when we reached a place they call Barzalor [TN: Basrur/Barcelore], this man went to the Gentiles' town, where he let us know he would stay a day. That day passed, and the weather was good, and we were embarked, and the *regidor* does not come. What is this? He sent word saying he could not come that day, because the following night he had to deflower a maiden; for thus[3] they call *quitar el virgo*.[4] He got a good payment out of it and came away.

The married women, staying at home, give it to whoever wants it; and whoever enters, leaves his sword and buckler at the door, which is the sign that that jest[5] is being done there. The husband comes and finds the doorway blocked, and goes off to do something else: whence there is the law that the children do not inherit, but the children of the sister. But what do you think, upon your life, the inheritance is? Those household goods I told you about above, and nothing more. And even the queen

[1] *Figs*. In Bondelmonti's letter, p. 254, we saw it written *fichsi*.

[2] A lacuna in the manuscript.

[3] *For thus* [*Che così*]. The manuscript reads *che cosa*; and perhaps that reading can also stand, meaning *la qual cosa* [which thing].

[4] *Quitar el virgo*. To deflower. [TN: Portuguese/Spanish.]

[5] *That jest* [*Quella baia*]. That chatter of p. 90.

[p. 298] lives under this law; and the king's children are not princes at all, but only his nephews [TN: i.e., his sister's sons].

And now of all these things the *Vecchino*[1] will give you an account, who is coming back with these ships, and knows ever so many things: but he is of

a bad breed and does not want to tell them to just anyone; and it will be necessary to coax them out of his mouth, especially because of certain busybodies who want nothing but to ask and ask.

The matter between you and Campoli seems to me to have been growing so shameful that, if there was no one to take the floor, I fear you will see each other again with stab-wounds[2] in hand… [text garbled in source] …and then you say that at night there is a miraculous drumming of people. If you want to quarrel with the whole world (you, who are quite a comfortable little fellow), what will others more ready with their fists do? You were angry too about the journey to Toledo, and were not well satisfied with the road to Valencia. Oh! Do you not see that you alone want to quarrel with the whole world? In these sham[3] enmities, if I were there, I could serve you as a bravo.

In earnest, I would like to see whether my weapons could keep so troublesome a thing at a distance. But let us leave these matters.

Lo Struffi[4] says he is sending me that seal, but neither Migliorati[5] nor I have seen it; it must have remained in the hands of the courier. But why did you have such a thing made? Tell me: "It is so easy[6] to get such things out of Clemente's hands that one[7] gladly gives him work." It should come this year: let it come, and you stay there, and love me. Farewell. In Cochin, the 27th of January 1585.

Your Lordship's

Most affectionate servant.

[1] *Vecchino*. So it should perhaps be read, and not *Picchino* as is in the manuscript. However, this Picchino is also named on p. 166.

[2] *Stab-wounds* [*Contellate*]. Or rather *coltellate* [knife-slashes], as one would

argue from the context. One must not trust so much in blundering copyists: and therefore after *in mano agli Euclidi*, I have resorted to ellipsis marks rather than set down some words that appear in a half-incomprehensible language; they are: *eslofleso tambene non parlave gin*.

[3] *Sham* [*Fatte*]. He perhaps meant *siffatte* [of this sort], as on p. 225.

[4] *Lo Struffi*. Or rather *lo Strozzi*?

[5] *Migl.ti*. Must be Migliorati.

[6] *Easy* [*Cosa*]. The manuscript reads *commi*.

[7] *One* [*Altrui*], in the nominative case, as on p. 278 and elsewhere.

[p. 299]

XCII. To the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Francesco I. Unpublished.[1]

He gives him several reports on the fortresses held by the Portuguese between Goa and Santa Cruz de Cochin, on the continual damage from raids by the Moors of Malabar, and — besides the various undertakings being planned — of a league between the Persian and the King of Portugal and the Pope against the Turk: lastly, of purchases made and to be made, on behalf of His Highness and his brother the Cardinal, of seeds of certain plants and other Indian rarities.

Most Serene Lord,

Last year I wrote to Your Highness of my arrival in this land, and gave such scant reports as in a short time and from sight of a small place I was able to give. Once that fleet was dispatched, I went to Goa where the Viceroy resides, and along the way — as one travels by coastal galleys hugging the shore — I went ashore at every fortress the Portuguese hold on the mainland, which are of the sort that ancient times perhaps permitted them to be made, and which are perhaps not otherwise necessary to be guarded by so great a captain as our Lord is [TN: *il nostro signore* — Philip I of Portugal (Philip II of Spain, r. 1580–1598), who had united the Iberian crowns in 1580; Sassetti is ironic: these decrepit forts are nominally under the protection of the most powerful monarch in the world]: for as regards the human garrisons, they are such that one may say that the Moors and Gentiles do not want them, rather than that the Portuguese defend them from them — since a single bell rung by a black man is all that watches over and guards them.

His Majesty has sent here this year a Milanese engineer to review all these fortifications, and as many have been desiring and recommending it, he will perhaps think to reorganize this military and the justice together; for the one and the other are reduced to a state of pity, and every bad outcome is to be feared if anything were to stir in these parts from any people other than these Indians, who are worthless — except for some of these Moors of Malabar. But these, by way of piracy alone, have done infinite damage until now, though a certain peace has been arranged between the Portuguese and the king of Calicut: from whose state, or the greater part of it, come the *parós* [TN: *paraus*, a type of fast Malabar war galley], which are galleys of 18 or 20

[1] Autograph in the Medicean Archive, *Filza* CXX, fol. 615.

[p. 300] benches without a deck, in which go 120 or 130 men with the rowers, and all at need take up arms; and these are the ones who have in a way destroyed this state, and brought much shame upon the Portuguese fleets.

And one raid among others, last year, was most notable, for they captured two very small brigantines from the fleet in which the Viceroy himself was present with more than 80 vessels, and also a galliot on which was the ambassador of the Great Mughal [TN: the Mughal emperor, at this time Akbar], who is the greatest prince of these parts, with goods worth more than forty thousand ducats.

By which Viceroy, at the end of last August, the commander of the fleet that comes to this Malabar was sent into the river where those little pirates had taken shelter, to retake the galliot and the artillery from them; but he left behind another three vessels and his life as well, his men fleeing like chickens from the fox.

There are being planned in these parts three enterprises of great importance: the first is the discovery of a silver mine, which they say contains a proportion of silver, in a river called Cuama near Sofala and Mozambique, where a band of Portuguese once stayed who went to discover it. The second is the conquest of the island of Ceylon,[1] possessed by a Gentile prince called *Rajah*, a very great enemy of the Portuguese, who almost continually harasses that fortress the Portuguese hold on the western side of that island, called Colombo, for the defense and maintenance of which much money is spent every year. The third is the conquest of a port on the island of Sumatra, which they call Aceh [TN: the Sultanate of Aceh, in northern Sumatra], which is today possessed by the Moors, notwithstanding that the dominion of the island belongs to various Gentile kings. But those dogs, having entered dissimulatively, have made themselves masters of it; and it is the port where three-quarters of the ships that carry spices to Mecca via Suez are loaded — because from there goes the pepper that we call *gauro* [TN: *pimenta gaura* — a Sumatran or Javanese black pepper, regarded as inferior to the prized Malabar pepper; the Portuguese used the term to distinguish non-Malabar pepper traded through Aceh], which comes from the island of Java and from a place they call the Sunda [TN: the Sunda Strait region]. From there go the cloves, nutmeg, and mace, which the same Javanese bring from the Moluccas, and the cinnamon that the Moors bring from Ceylon. The ships for Mecca load in December, and entering through the channels of the Maldive Islands, they emerge and go on their way along the coast of Arabia and enter the Red Sea, where sometimes a Portuguese fleet goes.

When a Viceroy wishes to enrich some of

> [1] *Ceylon* [*Zeilon*]. That is, Zeilan, or Seilan, or Ceilan.

[p. 301] his people by forbidding them entry, or else letting them pass by

agreement, it is also under consideration — according to a report by a Castilian captain that I saw (since there was no hope of taking Aden) — to build a fortress at the mouth of that sea of Arabia for this purpose of blocking the entry of the spices that go to Alexandria.

The plans are many, the resources few and uncertain, and the people poorly disposed to do anything of consequence. May God provide for all.

There passes with this fleet an ambassador come from the Persian [TN: the Shah of Persia] to negotiate with His Majesty and with His Holiness as well a league against the Grand Turk, and he offers assistance from this side for the enterprise against Aden. He goes so poorly provisioned and so poor that he makes a poor impression of his prince: an Augustinian Father leads his dance,[1] as with most of the Portuguese affairs of state.

The Cavalier Gianfigliazzi, from Madrid, charges me on behalf of Your Highness with procuring seeds of certain plants[2] to send. I arrived in Goa last year at the beginning of winter, during which time there is nothing to do but stay indoors. I struck up an acquaintance for this purpose with a Gentile physician, to whom, on my departure from Goa for here, I left this service recommended, and I have reminded him of it by letter: but since these are notions outside their humor and inclination, it is hard to be understood, and one dies trying to get them to do any minimal thing, notwithstanding any payment; and to do it by oneself is impossible, not being able to go inland.

Of the various domesticated fruits of the land, Giovanni Bondelmonti, who is returning with this fleet, carries pits and seeds; and arriving safely, he will kiss the hands of Your Highness, and if they keep during the voyage, he will give them to you; and whatever I may be able to gather, I shall send next year. The Portuguese and *mestiço*

[1] *Leads his dance* [*Mena la sua danza*]. That is, manages or directs his affair. A manner of speaking already noted by the Crusca with an example from Salviati.

[2] *Seeds of certain plants*. It is well known how eager Grand Duke Francesco was for such rarities; he who (according to Father Agostino del Riccio in his *Agricoltura sperimentale*, chapter on citrus, p. 874) "sometimes, when he went into his most beautiful gardens, both hanging and natural, would take a flower in his hand, and this flower was contemplated by him part by part, every color and beauty of it, with no small delight and contentment of his."

[p. 302] apothecaries have no curiosity whatsoever regarding simples; and to discuss them with them is to give them occasion to laugh. The Gentile physicians, whose science is entirely empirical, know a great deal about them, but being most miserly, they do not wish to show anything.

Last year I sent Your Highness certain few things that I found in this land, from the funds of yours I brought with me, thinking I could satisfy myself in Goa with things worthy of you from what I had left over; and if I did not send you so many rubies or so many diamonds from the remainder — quite dirty and far more expensive than they are worth there — there was nothing to buy because the ship from China did not come this year: which has been in a certain way the destruction of this land, aggravated by the believed loss of two ships from Bengal, which should already have been here a month ago, and of which there is no news.

There should come this year from China — if they have not expelled the Portuguese from Macao, which is also feared — up to 4 ships; and if I have been sent a canopy that I requested, of the sort of those little mantles I sent Your Highness last year, which would be worthy of your bed, I shall send it to you; if not, other things will not be lacking.

I have been unlucky in serving Your Highness in this small matter you entrusted to me. I bought some sets of stones of various kinds that come

from Cambay [TN: Khambhat in Gujarat, a major center for semi-precious stones], and two swords of different Malabar fashion; and I had made in Cannanore [TN: *Cananor* — modern Kannur, a Portuguese-held trading post on the northern Malabar coast, known for its Moorish craftsmen] three pairs of Moorish caps, which for a masquerade, as a novel invention, seemed elegant to me.

To the Lord Cardinal I send various things from his funds, as close to his wishes as I have been able. I wish Your Highness to understand that on my part no effort was spared to serve you, but that not wishing to send so many cloves or so much nutmeg, there was nothing else to send.

There came here in my company Giovanni Bondelmonti and Orazio Neretti — the latter for business, and Bondelmonti to see this land and because on this voyage I desired

[p. 303] his company as that of a true gentleman. The said Bondelmonti, being already of years and with a sister back there alone with no one, is returning with this fleet and sailing on the ship *Bom Jesus* [Good Jesus], which I pray may bring him safely. He will come to kiss the hands of Your Highness, and having sought to learn more particulars of many things than he could, he will give you an account of them; and I shall do the same with whatever more I shall learn in time and that I think may be pleasing to Your Highness: to whom I pray from Our Lord God the highest felicity.

The Moorish caps, in the few days they have been at sea, have turned the color of rust, and having seven months from here to Portugal, I expect they would be entirely black. The two Malabar swords are addressed to Lisbon to Andrea Migliorati, together with several other things I am sending to the Most Illustrious Cardinal. The stone sets are likewise addressed to the same. May Our Lord bring everything safely, and increase to Your

Highness state and glory.

From this city of Santa Cruz de Cochin, the 11th of February 1585.

Your Most Serene Highness's

Most humble vassal and servant.

XCIII. To the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Francesco I. Unpublished.[1]

He confirms what he said in the other letter regarding the things commissioned by him.

Most Serene Lord,

With a ship that departed from here on the 8th of this month, I wrote to Your Most Serene Highness giving more news of these parts, which I consider safely on its way. I also told you how, for want of the ship from China, I had not served Your Highness with anything that seemed to me worthy of you from the funds of yours that remained here with me; that I have only sent you a pair of swords from this Malabar land, and some sets of stones of various kinds that come from Cambay; and I judged it better to wait another year than to spend the money in any case on things that would give Your Highness no pleasure.

A ship from Malacca has appeared, and brings news that three from China are behind it; so I do expect that after so much time I shall manage to obtain something to my satisfaction for Your Highness's service.

To the Most Illustrious Cardinal, who specified in part the things he desired, I have sent various pieces, which I have addressed to Andrea Migliorati in Lisbon, so that he may send them on, addressed there to Your Highness: to whom I pray from Our Lord God length of life and increase of state. From Cochin, the 18th of February 1585.

Your Most Serene Highness's

Most humble vassal and servant.

[1] Autograph in the Medicean Archive, *Filza* CXX, fol. 438.

XCIV. To Maria Sassetti née Bartoli, in Florence. Published.

He treats of household necessities, with a fine mixture of witticisms and useful advice, also informing her of a property he has bought in Goa and of the great sorrow he felt at the death of Bondelmonti's sister.

Most honored and dearest Sister,

The waters of the Arno could not wash me clean if by misfortune it happened that the ships coming to Lisbon did not carry letters of mine to you; nor would it be any excuse to say they were on another ship that did not arrive — as it must serve as an excuse for me, since I am without your letters, and I find it hard. But you too shall bear the punishment, for I shall be briefer on this account; because, having no topic of yours to answer, I shall have nothing to tell you of my affairs except what I wish you to know, as usual — for if others told you everything, it would be a tribulation to live with.

This trick I learned from you and madonna Nera, who when you write to me tell me many little things that amount to nothing: she tells me nothing of the sciatica in her side nor the penance of La Scaglia, nor do you tell me of the affairs of Carmignano and of that Beca; and this year both of you pass it over in silence — so that, were it not for Francesco, I would have been in the dark about letters from the household and the family.

He does write me that you were well together with your children, which is good news; and that Margherita was alive and well, and was blossoming so as to give you very soon something to attend to, and make you a mother-in-law. May God prepare for her that good fortune desired by all.

[p. 305] With the letters you were supposed to write me, you were surely going to discuss the prospects the house can offer and what resources can be relied on; and as for those few funds on the Salviati bank, I expect they will have given you little profit, for the times have been so wretched that with much one has accomplished little, and with little, nothing. And as for the income from the land, if it has been enough for the household to sustain itself, that would have been a great deal — there never failing to be some little annoyance, now the ox that needs skinning, now the Ombrone [TN: the river near Carmignano, prone to flooding], now one thing and now another; and if anything is lacking, the expense of provisioning the household must be a thing without end: so that I see you in much tribulation, from which prayers must deliver you — not mine, I say, which are a cold and disconsolate thing, but those of our nuns, whom you must not forbid to pray God to inspire Margherita to become a nun — for with that you would be quit of all your trouble.

See to it therefore that they labor on this particular; and if she should be disposed to it, I hereby pledge to send her so much cotton cloth, which here they call *beatilhas* [TN: a fine white Portuguese-Indian cotton fabric used for veils and wimples], that she shall never lack wimples, nor gorgets, nor those little rags they wear on the head; and should she want the habit and the bib, we will give her that too:[1] what of it! But if she should not be disposed to the monastic life, I see no better remedy for her than to remain on good terms with her brother Roberto, and to commend herself to him — because by continuing at the shop and making himself a worthy young man, he may soon be in a position to help her with something of importance, as the Vellutis have helped their women.

And this he will accomplish very easily if, putting aside all boyish and childish thoughts, he devotes himself to being assiduous in the business of his superiors, so that he does not miss a moment, making that his delight

and his practice, striving to give them every satisfaction and contentment of himself, and above all not dirtying his hands with their money, but giving them an account of it always, down to a *picciolo* [TN: the smallest Florentine coin]: because if he were to do otherwise and begin early to settle accounts with them and remain their debtor now for a bit and now for another, you may reckon he would be drowned forever.

And therefore, should he happen, whether collecting from their debtors or otherwise, to handle their money, let him not go to bed without giving them an account of it down to a *picciolo*, because in that way he will serve their interest and his own. You will have him read this letter, so that he may well understand this point and make use of it, reminding him of it always; and should his present masters or others wish to entrust him with money, do not allow it; and above all, if asked, do not go surety for him or for anyone, not for a *bagattino*,[1] for your condition does not require it. Remember this particular, now and always taking account of it, because otherwise you would find yourself deceived.

Girolamo I believe will be going to school, and will be a good boy, and will learn the things that befit him, being already able to see how straitened things are and with what difficulty one goes forward — so that there is no time to waste.

> [1] *Bagattino*. The fourth part of the Florentine *quattrino*, also called by another name *picciolo*.

[p. 306] And since we have run on with the topic of your household, it will be well now to come to treating what I told you before about my own affairs: but I wish, as when I was small and the confessor asked me about my sins and I felt I had already half told them, that there were some question of yours to which, by replying, one enters from one thing into another more easily than confessing one’s sins like that, cold and on one’s

own.

I am not about to return either this year or the next; and in the one that comes after, it will be as God wills: which is the juice and substance of this topic. If you were to ask me what I do here, I would tell you that I am the reverse of the shad, which in spring come out of the salt water and enter the fresh water; and I at that time come out of the fresh water and enter the salt water; and I do not lack those many bones they have, which ought to prick others and make them cough, but which for now have that effect on me.

I have not yet spawned as they do when they are caught — although this past winter I was half afraid of it, on account of some tale my black woman had put about, the story of which I write to madonna Nera: and so I say nothing more of it to you.

I do not know if it will please you to hear that I have entered into real property in these parts, having bought in Goa a property[1] that cost me 400 ducats, in which the men serve as the donkey and the ox, and for these female animals the women serve, and they plant onions, cabbages, lettuces, and other good things. There you have the whole story; and this will serve not to die of boredom in winter, as happens to those who do not take up some such activity, as messer Giovanni Bondelmonti will tell you — or will have told you — who came back last year and will not have had the grace to find his sister alive; at whose death I have felt infinite sorrow, for the poor woman will with reason have attributed to me the fact that her brother was not at her side when she died.

I acted for his good, as I believe he knows and understands; and since death is common and without remedy, his being present would not have lengthened her life nor prevented her death: so, patience.

From my brother Francesco I have learned of the misfortune of our cousin

Barducci, and I am sorry for him and for all; but for that poor old woman, madonna Maria, without end — for, all things considered, she will live the time Our Lord gives her with much trouble and discontent. May God, who can, extend His aid to her and give her patience, and to you all that you desire.

At sea, between Goa and Cochin, the 23rd of December 1585.

Most affectionate brother.

> [1] *Property* [*Processione*]. *Processione* for *possessione* [possession/property]; a manner used by the ancients, and today remaining only among country folk. — Crusca.

[p. 308]

XCV. To Michele Saladini, in Pisa. Published.[1]

First he corrects certain things he had written to Francesco Buonamici, in Letter LXIII, about the circulation of the winds and about the voyage of Columbus and of Vespucci. Then he speaks of the variation of the compass, of the best navigation to be followed in going to India, and of the different qualities and trade in peppers; then of Portuguese dominion in the East Indies, and of their fleets and fortresses.

With the first two ships that departed I wrote you a single letter by the post; this one will go helter-skelter,[2] so I shall not be able to satisfy myself in replying to your great long letter. I shall tell you first that I am very pleased to understand from your writing that you have given yourself to cosmography. It seems to me that little is lacking, by a certain rule that Signor Piero Grifo[3] and I have established here regarding what is needed to draw men to India, before seeing you turn up here one day. And what if….[4]

You really believe that I remember what I wrote to Buonamici on the subject of the winds and Columbus: which Buonamici did me a fine service with that letter, our Tenero[5] writing me, I know not à propos of what, that it was going about in the hands of Signor Don Giovanni [TN: unidentified with certainty; most likely Don Giovanni de' Medici (1567–1621), illegitimate son of Grand Duke Cosimo I and a prominent military and cultural figure — the implication being that Sassetti's private letter had reached embarrassingly illustrious hands]. One cannot trust a friend in these times! Now I believe my argument was meant to say this, in its own language: that those southwest winds, from which they say

[1] Collated with the manuscript copy in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana. At the beginning of the letter are found, in a different ink, these

words: *Suppose that all these things serve as answers to doubts, in reply to questions asked of him by me.*

[2] *Helter-skelter* [*A cavallo a logaggio*]. Not to confuse them, I shall say that of these two adverbial expressions, the first seems to me to mean the same as if it were doubled [i.e., *a cavallo a cavallo*, in great haste], as seen in the example on p. 242; and the second to be a disguise of the Spanish *a locazo*, that is, in a crazy manner: hence both together meaning in haste and fury, or in haste and pell-mell.

[3] *Signor Piero Grifo*. [TN: Apparently a friend or acquaintance in the Indies.]

[4] [TN: Sassetti trails off suggestively — implying Saladini might yet be tempted to come to India.]

[5] *Tenero*. [TN: A nickname for a mutual acquaintance.]

[3] *Piero Grifo*, a Pisan nobleman. See the *Famiglie Pisane* by R. Roncioni, expanded and annotated by F. Bonaini, in the *Archivio storico italiano*, vol. VI, part II, section II.

[4] A lacuna in the manuscript, not noticed by the Florentine editors.

[5] *Tenero*. Giambattista Strozzi, also called below by this academic name.

[p. 309] the writers say Columbus was moved as a philosopher to argue that in that region there was land, arise only there around the Canaries; as proof of which he noted that from the Canaries onward toward those parts, the winds are always from the northeast. Add the argument that within the tropics the winds do not pass beyond — *sì credere dignum est* [TN: "if this be worthy of belief"] — Father Acosta[1] saying that the south wind does not blow from the other Pole, but from the tropic, or its boundary. This was the argument, or was meant to be.

Correct either my letter or the impression taken from it, where it says that at 4 degrees latitude they find the northeast wind, and with the prow toward the northwest they come to the Canaries — because, as you can see with

chart in hand, this is impossible, for they pass 400 or 500 leagues or more wide of the Canaries; and so they come within sight of the new land of *Bavagliaos* [TN: likely Newfoundland/Bacalhaos, the Portuguese name for the cod-fishing banks], and having come to the latitude of the Azores [TN: *Terzere*, the Terceiras] with the winds from that land, they run along that latitude until they strike the islands; and often enough they strike the French as well.

But to return to Columbus: that in that discovery of his there was some theft of invention, do not doubt it; for, besides some other confirmation, the pilot of our ship was telling me what I have heard at other times — about some story of a man who died, and whose papers remained on the island of Madeira, with certain other things. And as for the return from the West Indies, you should know that they do not come back by the same route they went, because on the return they pass behind the island of Hispaniola (at this point you have me running about with a navigation chart); I mean the fleet of New Spain and that of *Tierra Firme*, which pass through that channel made by Cuba and Florida; and coming out from among those shallows they head east-northeast (or if you prefer, Greco-Levante), and go to Bermuda, where they join the fleet of Santo Domingo, and there with the winds from that coast they make their way along the same route as the ships of the Portuguese.

But to return once more to Columbus: I do not believe that by taking from him the conjecture about the winds one takes from him the glory of his action, because things already passed into judgment cannot be dislodged from people's heads; nor would a historian, however truthful, who wrote of Troy differently from Home-

[1] *Father Acosta*. The printed edition reads *il padre Aristotile* [Father Aristotle], without even correcting the error in the Table of corrections, as on p. 319.

[p. 310] -r, accomplish anything….[1] And in particular, you know how much I helped and urged our Tenero [TN: Giambattista Strozzi] to attempt his crossing: a worthy work, possessing grandeur and marvel, and something beyond the tales of Ulysses.

For as to our Vespucci, one must be content with what falls to his share.[2] It would be good if affections could help him; but to expect help from Lisbon? I tell you: you'll be putting it off till tomorrow.[3] There never was a more wretched people for preserving their own records — think what they will do with foreign ones. I say this because Migliorati writes me that you had asked him for information, and that he had applied to a learned man of his, called *Quebra sin hoc*, which means "Bell-Breaker," who had promised him a certain letter written by Vespucci to the Signoria of Florence: now see if you are well on your way.

The matters of the compass — I commend you to your own wits[4] — are beyond count. What is this business, that 80 leagues to the west of the last island of the Azores it points due north; in Lisbon it declines toward the northeast more than a quarter; over there[5] even more; on the coast of Brazil (curse it!) two quarters; on this side of the Cape of Good Hope at a cape called *das Agulhas* [TN: Cape Agulhas, "Cape of the Needles," named for the compass variation], it turns due north again; from there onward it pulls to the northwest; and on this coast it makes a further deviation, still pulling to the northwest by a quarter and a half? Go and work it out yourself; and what is worse, on the same meridian at one latitude it makes one deviation, at another latitude another, which Marianus would not understand, let alone Nozzolino [TN: apparently mutual acquaintances or proverbially dim figures].

Crossing — or rather, passing the Canaries to come to India — one goes due north-south with those islands, and passes between the Cape Verde

islands and the mainland, and goes straight as much as one can down to 4 degrees latitude on our side, where one finds the winds they call *general* [TN: the trade winds], which for the most part begin to blow from the southeast; and with these one must cross the equinoctial, setting

[1] Here, in the manuscript as well, a blank is left.

[2] *What falls to his share* [*Che gli cape*]. So distinctly in the manuscript. The printed edition reads: *che egli cape*.

[3] *You'll be putting it off till tomorrow* [*Tu infornerai domane*]. That is, you'll never get it — help from Lisbon. See the Glossary.

[4] *I commend you to your own wits* [*Mi raccomando a voi*]. Another adverbial expression, also used on pp. 237 and 279, and in the following letter; meaning roughly: "farewell to that; it's a lost cause."

[5] *Over there* [*Costà*]. The printed edition reads *nella costa* [on the coast].

[p. 311] the prow toward the southwest; and whoever finds himself closer to the coast of Ethiopia, when these winds blow, makes a better navigation, because he is more to advantage — the Portuguese say *mais abal de vento* [TN: Portuguese: more to leeward]; *sopravvento* [windward], our people would say.

In crossing the line they keep track of a rock they call the *Penedo de San Pedro* [TN: St. Peter's Rock, a navigational landmark in the mid-Atlantic], and whoever leaves it further to the west has made a better passage, and whoever passes close to it needs God to help him. Those southeast winds tend to shift toward the east, and sometimes to the east-northeast, at which point the prow is set south and south-southeast; and so one makes good navigation, passing near that island they call *Martim Vaz* [TN: the Martim Vaz archipelago, off the Brazilian coast]. Whoever stays with the southeast winds, as we did the first time, ends up on the coast of Brazil; and once one has sight of it — my compliments to your lordship — for turning back, the

terms are good. One cannot winter there, because the king forbids it, there being in those rivers *gusanos* [TN: Portuguese: shipworms, *Teredo navalis*] (as they call them) that render the ships unnavigable; and few wintered there without coming to a bad end. In sum, he navigates best who passes furthest from the coast of Brazil.

But many, for this very reason, plant themselves so close to the coast of Africa that the calms fall upon them and make them lose the voyage, as nearly happened to us the second time.

As for the transmutation that the equinoctial line supposedly works, that must have been in the time of Tiresias, when the male became female:[2] it has not happened to me, neither the first nor the second time, nor in the four times I have crossed that blessed line.

But regarding the difference you say is found between the peppers that come from Lisbon and those from Alexandria, I shall tell you: those that went to Lisbon from 4 years back all came from this ill-fated Cochin, this king giving them to the Portuguese for some time now out of spite; and they were always loaded newly picked before time, whence

> [2] *When the male became female*. Dante, *Inferno* XX, tercet 14: "See Tiresias, who changed his form / when the male became female."

[p. 312] comes their not being full, and in drying making much husk and having little substance. This year I have loaded among other things 6,000 *cantara* [TN: a *cantar* or *quintal*, a Portuguese unit of weight, roughly 60 kg] on the coast between here and Goa, which has cost me a white hair for every grain; and among them are some 4,000 *cantara* that one may well set aside as *gauro* pepper [TN: a coarser, lower-quality pepper from Sumatra and Java], which has nothing to do with this in any respect.

The Moors who ship it to Mecca, if they get it from this coast (and they take a great deal), buy the old stock and clean it — because, as it goes against the embargo, it costs much, and it does not pay to ship husk or powder. And indeed they obtain some from Calicut, where it is rather more wretched than this of Cochin: but the greater part of what goes to Alexandria, which they call *gauro*, goes from the island of Sumatra, and there it comes from Java from a place they call the Sunda [TN: the Sunda Strait region]. And in Sumatra there is a Moorish king whose kingdom is called Aceh [TN: *Dachen*], where the Moors of Mecca go to load the pepper, which is large and good and in its proper season;[1] and this is, as I tell you, the *gauro* pepper. And if from Lisbon they were to send you pepper from Honavar [TN: *Onor*, a Portuguese trading post on the Malabar coast], you would see there is none like it in the world.

> [1] *In its proper season* [*In sua stazione*]. The printed edition may read *stagione* [season]; Marcucci notes the word could be either, the senses being nearly synonymous in context.

On the coast of Ethiopia the Portuguese have their first fortress past the first Moorish territory, which is called Arguim, in the Cape Verde islands; and it seems to me that before La Mina they hold another castle on the Malagueta coast [TN: the "Pepper Coast," modern Liberia], and nothing more — but friendships and commerce throughout all those rivers further down: Congo, San Salvador [TN: *Sumicongo*, i.e., São Salvador do Congo], and Angola, where they go from São Tomé and Lisbon to buy black people; and in all these rivers there are Portuguese, and many of those black people are Christians subject to the bishop of São Tomé, who was telling me in Portugal that they are very fine Christians; and Migliorati, who was present, replied: *Así lo creo yo* [TN: Spanish: "So I believe"].

The first fortress in Brazil is above Pernambuco toward the equator by 7 or 8 leagues, which the French took from them. But below Pernambuco there

are plenty too in their fashion;[2] and among others *Los Ilhéus* [TN: Ilhéus, a captaincy in Bahia], which belongs to Francesco Giraldi; the *Bahía de Todos los Santos* [TN: the Bay of All Saints, Salvador da Bahia], Porto Seguro, and the Rio de Janeiro, and other places that they now inhabit and now abandon, because those black people give them cause to think ill.

From Malacca eastward they inhabit an island at the mouth of the river of China called Macao, and a bishop resides there, but there is no other fortress: for the king of China is not one to trifle with, and two or three times has threatened to expel them; and since last year the usual ship did not come from there, it is strongly feared he has thrown off this mask, because[1] they committed some insolence there. Enough: I have 700 *scudi* of mine there; bless them, for they ought to be coming back now within a month.

> [1] *Because* [*Perchè*]. Does not appear in the manuscript.

[p. 313] In Japan they have nothing but friendships: there the Jesuit Fathers command, they wage wars and install kings, and other things. The religion of that island is of the Gentiles, all bestiality. The people are very sharp, well inclined, with much honor, and, as the Portuguese say, *tratão verdade* [TN: Portuguese: "they deal in truth," i.e., they are sincere].[1] *Secus* [otherwise] the Chinese — wicked, thieves, forgers, enemies, and what? Every evil.

The Molucca Islands had a king friendly to the Portuguese, who gave them a fortress on Ternate [TN: the manuscript reads *Tudor*, likely a copyist corruption — *Ternate* or possibly *Tidore*, the two rival principal Moluccan islands; the Portuguese fort in question was Fort São João Baptista on Ternate; Marcucci does not annotate the variant], which is the principal island, and was resolved to send a son of his to Goa to study the Christian law. It came into the fancy of a Father of the Society of Jesus to have this

king murdered, so that the Portuguese might remain lords of all the islands and make the peoples Christian; and so he had it put into execution by the captain of the fortress — who was not then able to defend himself against the son of the murdered king, who took the fortress, the captain fleeing by sea. And so he [the son] holds it, he says, to give it to the king of Portugal, provided the murderer be handed over to him: who was at last being sent there in chains; but the galleon carrying him was lost, as nearly all have been since that crime — for at least to Goa none returns, though one departs for there every year. They do come back to Malacca, but the business is not good, for the Javanese have made themselves masters of it, although the Castilians, coming from the Philippines, gave them *unas pocas* [TN: Spanish: "a few" — i.e., a few blows]; and the Moluccas galleon departs from Goa, which ought to be the chief of the India trade, although the Portuguese do what they can, either with new duties or with ill treatment, to divert it.

And the dispute over the Moluccas between the Castilians and the Portuguese is over, for the king [TN: Philip II, now ruling both Spain and Portugal] entitles himself lord of them separately, as though he does not wish to give them to one kingdom or the other; but he wants that trade to come this way, because the Castilians who were there brought to Manila, which is the metropolis of the Philip-

[p. 314] -pines, many cloves to send to Acapulco in New Spain, and the king had them shipped via Malacca, on pain of death.

The coast of India is 96 degrees further east than Lisbon. You can now see, more or less, to whom the Moluccas belong juridically according to the division made by Alexander VI [TN: the Treaty of Tordesillas line and its Pacific extension], reckoning that on the chart they are placed more or less correctly in relation to this coast.

With the king of Calicut called the Zamorin [TN: the *Samoothiri*, paramount ruler of the Malabar coast] — which is a princely title — the Portuguese have been almost always at war until last year, when, weary, they began to negotiate a peace, which is not yet concluded; and the Viceroy now going to Goa will have to make something of it.

The war is fought at sea, and the Portuguese deploy at least two fleets: one from Goa northward, and the other from Goa toward here; and this one is called the Malabar fleet. In all they will be 60 or 70 *fustas* and galliots, without decks, with rough-barked oars;[1] and of other local ones along the whole coast, which in a need are quickly readied, there will be the work of 150 more *fustas*; and in Goa there are 3 galleys in all.

From Prester John[2] no embassy comes to us; his share of the trade is small and of little consequence, for that gold of his is not seen — he wants it for himself. You well know that these *fustas* have no other business than to prevent the Moors from carrying spices to Mecca; but the fat of that saint[3] can do much more than you or I.

Gentiles are made Christian at all hours, but in good faith one gains little from their cases. And just yesterday a Father Spinola told me that from here to Cape Comorin he has seventeen or eighteen thousand at his back, but they are poor Christians. Of Christian kings there are few here, or none. In Japan there are some, but how many I do not know. With their neighbors they are on bad terms rather than good, and often come to a breach; and once there is war, behind the wall *salvus est* [TN: "he is safe" — i.e., they only fight from safety]: and on the contrary, the Gentiles at sea

> [1] *Rough-barked oars* [*Remi scorzili*]. So the manuscript. The Florentine printed edition has *sentili*; the Reggio reprint *fensili*. Whoever guesses right is clever. Not to mention that others have proposed *pensili*! But closer to the true meaning seems *scorzilli* — roughly, unbarked poles, that is, sticks not stripped of their

bark.

[2] *Prester John*. See p. 290, note 2.

[3] *The fat of that saint* [*La grascia di quel santo*]. An allusion to that passage in Boccaccio in Novella 6 [TN: *Decameron* VI.10], where money is called in slang "the fat of Saint John Goldenmouth, etc."; which much helps the ailment of pestilent avarice in clergymen.

[p. 315] do not make war except as corsairs, and they steal so much that if you earned as much in a year, you would be excused from laboring further.

The Persian is a friend, and with this fleet an ambassador of his passes to Portugal. They call the said king of Persia the *Scià Tamas* [TN: *Shāh Tahmāsp* — Shah Tahmasp I (r. 1524–1576), the long-reigning Safavid monarch whose name had become the standard European designation for the Persian king. The reigning Shah in 1585 was in fact Mohammad Khodabanda (r. 1578–1587); Sassetti uses Tahmasp's name as the conventional European label], whence they say the term *scacco matto* [checkmate] derives [TN: a genuine etymology: *scaccomatto* does derive from Persian/Arabic *shāh māt* (شاه مات), "the king is helpless" — the Sassetti-era account is correct].

A single Viceroy commands all of India from Mozambique to Malacca; but the captains are appointed by the king, and the seat of his court is in Goa. From the Cape of Good Hope southward no land has been seen from here to that which those parrots saw: *unde psittacorum regio* [TN: "whence the region of parrots" — a reference to the early Portuguese name for Brazil, *Terra dos Papagaios*].

I have happened upon a pen so well tempered that it writes fluently without much labor; otherwise, of your ill-resolved questions you would have had no other information for now. I say this in order to pass beyond the

questions to other matters, because of those navigations both the most southern and the most northern, I willingly refer myself to Olaus Magnus [TN: the Swedish historian who wrote about Scandinavian lands], so as not to die of cold reading about them, let alone seeking them out.

My abode (since you ask me) is partly in Goa, and partly here in Cochin, and partly at sea; for one must go up and down, visiting these places where the *pimenta*[1] [pepper] is gathered; speaking to these chess-piece kings,[2] and always giving them the best; and so wearing out one's life on these *fustas*, which is, I promise you, a dog's business. Of Malacca I have not thought at all. It will be as God…[3]

From Cochin, 1585.

[1] *Pimenta* (or *pimenta*). A Spanish [TN: and Portuguese] word meaning pepper.

[2] *These chess-piece kings* [*Questi re di scacchi*]. He calls them thus either because he has just said that the King of Persia was entitled *Scià Tamas*, whence came *scacco matto*, or out of contempt, likening them to those figures or pieces in the game of chess.

[3] *It will be as God…* Here is the reading of the manuscript, and I add neither salt nor vinegar to it: *Sarà lo che Dios guiscer (?) da ogni poco dolente*. [TN: The text is garbled, likely a mix of Portuguese and Italian; Marcucci throws up his hands.]

XCVI. To Giambattista Strozzi, in Florence. Published.[1]

He gives an ample description of the three annual seasons that obtain in the East Indies.

Most Magnificent Sir,

The beginning[2] of my letter will be the same as was found in Pisa in three or four letters written by a single person on the same day to different friends. I ought to have and wished to write to you the first year I arrived in these parts, but those bad things that are reputed *rerum jocundarum* [TN: "among life's pleasures"], cause me always to put off till the last my obligations; and heaping up many things to do in a short time, I am always forced to leave some undone — and at that point I presume more upon those from whom I hope for forgiveness more easily.

I wrote last year, and since they were in reply to two of yours, my topics were about what you had written to me. This year I have no letters from you nor from any of my other friends (except a half one from Saladini). I shall begin by writing you about my own affairs; and the sum of it will be that I go about this India growing as old as I can.

In this India[4] the year has only three seasons; on account of which it is no sooner begun than it passes, and human life turns out to be 25 percent worse than what it is among us. The ancient poets did not know this thing, so they did not leave it written, nor could it be guessed; and a Castilian who advised me against coming to India, giving me the reason that heaven was as near here as there, did not know it either, or did not tell me,[5] for this was the true way to dissuade me.

Not only is the year here[1] a quarter less than it is among us, but it is also[2] turned upside down and begins in reverse. See, I beg you, where I have brought myself,[3]

> [1] Collated and augmented with the Capp. manuscript no. 80 and the Cambiagi; for which see p. 191, note 5.
>
> [2] *The beginning*. This is unpublished up to the other paragraph beginning *In this India*.
>
> [4] *In this India*. The Cambiagi manuscript enters into the matter without saying *In this India*, which would have been an idle repetition; but what was needed was *the year*, which is also missing, and to which the following words refer: *is no sooner begun*.
>
> [5] *Did not tell me* [*Disse*]. The printed edition reads *volle dire* [meant to say].

[p. 317] coming to live in that land where the Portuguese alone (as a Milanese engineer was saying this year, burning with a most ardent fever) insist that one can live, while all others cry for help — that this zone is uninhabitable and forever scorched by fire. But let us leave this, and return to the shortening of the year and its different beginning; and let us see how the matter stands.

You must know, then, that here the year is divided into three seasons: one of which they call winter, and it is the first; the second is the season of the land-winds, and the third is summer.

This winter begins here from the 15th to the 20th of May,[4] and generally at the full moon that falls in that time. It comes suddenly and makes from the season preceding it (as Castelvetro would say) a strange passage, and without the consolation of any middle temper: for whereas in those times the heat is excessive and so great that one can scarcely live without certain precautions and care, all at once certain southern winds enter with such fury of thunder, lightning, bolts, and rain that it seems the world is about to

end; and well is verified of this wind, even in these parts, what is said of it: *Auster fulmine pollens* [TN: "the South wind, mighty with thunderbolts"].

This impetuous storm[5] lasts 15 or 20 days at most; and being so furious, they are not continuous throughout that time. After them come the westerly and southwesterly winds, which, ceasing those ruinous blasts, bring continuous rain, with which they taper off toward the end of August. By the 15th or 20th of September they generally finish, though there are particular places where they last more or less, according to whether they are more southern or more northern.

And in this span of time the rain is nearly continuous, and sometimes so heavy that no roof can withstand it; although for this reason

> [4] *From the 15th to the 20th of May*. The printed edition reads *on the 15th or the 20th of May*.
>
> [5] *Storm* [*Fortuna*]. The printed edition reads *rovina* [ruin].

[p. 318] they are built in the manner we see the roofs of Flanders and Germany — which, so that they may not be burdened excessively with snow, have a very sharp peak in the center. Yet the weather does tire of raining from time to time, and gives some bright interval, and particularly there at the beginning of July, producing cloudy, hot, and vexatious weather lasting 10 to 12 days, which they call here the *veranilho* [TN: Portuguese *veranico*, a brief dry spell within the monsoon], something like our Indian summer of Saint Martin's Day.[1]

Now, as you see, this winter begins at the time when the sun, having passed beyond the zenith of this land, goes toward the Tropic of Cancer, and lasts until it has returned to the equinoctial: which thing was noted by Pliny in the chapter he devotes to Taprobana [TN: ancient name for Sri Lanka],[2] where, recounting the customs of the peoples of that island, he says they

refrain from navigating from the solstice until the autumnal equinox;[3] and giving the reason, he says: “for at that time it is winter in that sea.” Which reason might seem insufficient, since among us one does not navigate with difficulty in ships except in winter. But so it is, that here the winds are so fierce in their storms and so greatly churn the sea that one is frightened by the very sight alone.

But beyond the tempest they bring, a most beautiful novelty follows; for they churn up the sands from the bottom of the sea, so that they form a hedge at the mouth[4] and entrance of the ports, and close them in such a way that a boat, however tiny, could not enter or leave; so that, since the roads by land[5] are also unsafe, people remain those months without knowing anything other than what happens in the same place.

Now these winter winds are not cold, except to some degree the southern ones; although their effects are[6] very different from those of our winds, either from their own quality, or because

[1] *Our Indian summer of Saint Martin’s Day*; which, as the proverb says, lasts three days and a smidgen.

[2] *Taprobana*. The most famous (according to the ancients) of the various islands of the Indian sea.

[3] *Of the autumn*. So the Camb. manuscript. The Capp. reads *and autumn*; the printed edition *and autumn*.

[4] *Form a hedge at the mouth* [*A far siepe su la foce*]. Taken from the well-known verse of Dante in *Inferno* XXXIII: *E faccian siepe ad Arno in su la foce* [“And let them dam the Arno at its mouth”]; and repeated in Letter C.

[5] *By land* [*Per terra*]. The Camb. manuscript reads *di terra*.

[6] *Are* [*Sono*]. The printed edition reads *Sieno*.

[p. 319] the constitutions and the men are of rarer and frailer flesh, and

therefore more easily harmed. There occurred at the beginning of the past winter, before our very eyes, the following incident: the slaves and other servants, both Indian and Portuguese, during the summer sleep in the streets and in the squares; and a Portuguese lad of 20 years,[1] having already lain down to sleep in front of the door[2] of his master, who was our neighbor, woke up when it was the fourth hour[3] of the night, with winter coming in with a great tempest; and taking up the mat on which he had been sleeping, he was fleeing into the house; but he could not get inside, for arriving at the door, he fell dead — from, I believe, some pestiferous quality that the wind carried with it, and not from the cold piercing him through, as the Portuguese say: although it is hard to conjecture[4] whence that wind gathered the said evil quality,[5] since Father Acosta[6] does not allow that these southern winds[7] blow, as he says, from the other Pole. Nor is it known what land lies in this direction on the other side of the equinoctial, from which they could blow and rise, even if they were to cross the equinoctial line. Which does not seem possible to concede from the observations that have been made; for in a span[8] of 6 degrees — three on one side and three on the other — the general winds die down, and nothing is felt but certain little squalls that arise there and die there, lasting very briefly.

Nevertheless we shall leave the consideration of this to the philosophers, as well as the explaining of how it comes about that in one part of this India it is winter, and in the other at the same time[9] it is summer, all being in the same

[1] *A Portuguese lad of 20 years* [*Un garzone portughese di 20 anni*]. The printed edition reads *ed un garzone di 20 anni Portoghese* [with word order inverted].

[2] *In front of the door* [*Di fronte della porta*]. The printed edition reads *di fronte alla porta*.

[3] *At the fourth hour of the night* [*Che erano le quattro ore di notte*]. So the

Capp. manuscript. The printed edition reads *che sariano state le 4 ore*; the Camb. *sulle quattro ore*.

[4] *It is hard to conjecture* [*Mal si può conietturare*]. The printed edition reads *mal si possa congetturare*.

[5] *The said evil quality* [*Ricogliessi la detta mala qualità*]. The printed edition reads *ricogliesse la mala qualità*.

[6] *Father Acosta*. The two manuscripts give only the initial letter of this name; in the printed edition he is identified as Aristotle, and corrected in the Table of corrections to who he certainly was: the author of the *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* [TN: José de Acosta, S.J. (1539–1600), the Spanish Jesuit missionary and naturalist; his work was translated into Italian by Giovanni Paolo Gallucci, Venice 1596 — one of the foundational texts of New World natural history].

[7] *Winds* [*Venti*]. Missing from the printed edition.

[8] *In a span* [*In ispazio*]. The printed edition reads *per lo spazio*.

[9] *At the same time* [*Nell'istesso tempo*]. The printed edition reads *in un istesso tempo*.

[p. 320] climate and parallel. For this whole coast running from south to north, or slightly aslant,[1] its whole length[2] is divided by a spine[3] of mountains along the same line [TN: the Western Ghats]: which mountains leave one part to the west, which is this coast where the Portuguese rule many places, and another part remains to the east. Now, when it is winter in this western part, it is summer in all that eastern part. Conversely, when it is winter there, as it is now, here it is summer; and this difference is so clearly marked in many places on the same mountain that if someone crossing it stopped in the middle, he would have one foot in winter and the other in summer: a thing certainly of the greatest interest, and one that gives[4] much wonder.

After the winter described above comes the season of the *terreni* [land-

winds], so called for the winds that begin to blow at this time, which, coming from the east, from the direction of land, are called by the locals *terreni*. These begin to blow at the end of winter, the earth being already well soaked by the preceding rains, and last for the space of four months, having their phases of beginning, growth, peak, decline, and end. By constricting the upper surface of the earth, they help it to conserve the moisture with which it remained pregnant during the winter, for the sustenance at the extreme of summer of living things, which would otherwise all perish from the very great dryness.

These winds, compared to the others that are felt, are cold and dry in such a manner that for those who sleep uncovered, as is universally the custom in these parts, in the morning at dawn, when they begin to blow, a quilt feels good — not to say a bit of company; and the water left out in the open at night is found in the morning very cold, and invites one to drink it — which at other times is a pity, so warm is it.[5]

But although from these winds the crows do not drop dead from cold, as we say, the natives and others who live here in India fear them mightily; and indeed whoever is of weak and thin flesh, as has been said, is greatly harmed by them.

> [1] *Or slightly aslant*. The Camb. manuscript reads, perhaps better: "For this whole coast running south and north, slightly aslant."
>
> [2] *Length* [*Lunghezza*]. The printed edition reads *larghezza* [breadth].
>
> [3] *Spine* [*Schiena*]. The printed edition reads *schiera* [row].
>
> [4] *Gives* [*Porge*]. The printed edition reads *cagiona* [causes].
>
> [5] *And is a pity, so warm is it* [*È compassione: in modo sono calde*]. The printed edition reads: *è una compassione per essere calda* [is a pity for being warm].

And many Portuguese are seen crippled by the catarrhs that descend upon

them, and there are such apoplexies that twist their mouths and contract an arm or a leg; which infirmity is not improperly called by the Portuguese *dateleria* [TN: likely a corruption of a Portuguese medical term]: on account of which everyone dresses more warmly in that season and at that hour. The Indians put on certain tunics of silk or other cloth, padded with cotton, and wear them until midday, when that wind no longer has force and the sea breeze succeeds it, coming in with the tide, fresh and delightful, to which everyone would open his breast, if he could, to receive it within.

These land-winds begin to slacken at the end of this month of January, from which time onward one goes until midday without relief; at which hour, or shortly after, certain winds begin to blow from the northwest quarter, which do come[1] from the sea, but only for a short stretch; and rising from those wretched lands of Arabia and Ethiopia, they do not produce a good effect, because in the long run, although they seem cool at first encounter, they dry out and scorch.

And as the sun then[2] returns to this side, the heat goes on increasing and the summer becoming vexatious and insufferable, both from the great heat and from its deserving[3] the epithet Lucretius gave it of *pulverulenta* [dusty]: for in Goa among other things the dust is such that nothing can resist it.

To live well in these times in these parts, those who have business abroad must do it from sunrise — which will be our 11 o'clock — until 2;[4] because from then on cold bread is worth money to us and the hot goes for nothing;[4] nor can one walk where the sun beats down, for the soles of the feet cramp up.[5] The heat goes on increasing in step with the sun's motion, and the nearer it approaches, the greater it becomes. The waters and all the beverages are so hot that one abstains from drinking in extreme thirst, there being no place for the

[1] *Do come* [*Bene*]. The printed edition reads *pure*.

[2] *Then* [*Allora*]. Missing from the printed edition.

[3] *From its deserving* [*Come pel convenirseli*]. The printed edition reads *sì pel convenirsele*.

[4] *Cold bread is worth money to us, and the hot goes for nothing*. See p. 287. [TN: The Boccaccio proverb from *Decameron* VI.10.]

[5] *Cramp up* [*Se ne sentono raggranchiare*]. The printed edition reads *se ne sente raggricchiar*.

[p. 322] trusty cooling-pitcher.[1]

But when the sun passes from the zenith of this land toward the Tropic of Cancer (as I was saying above), winter begins in the manner I have told you; and though none of the seasons customary in our land bears resemblance to it, it resembles spring, its qualities being hot and moist: and the grasses having died from the burning heat just past, they then begin to sprout anew; and the great trees, although they always retain the honor of their leaves, at that time begin to put forth new ones in order to shed the old.[2] The herds, having reached that season weary and spent, with the new food of the green grasses are seen to give much milk. Small children, no differently than we see them among us in some heavy snowfall, run through the rain and water with much merriment; they play and leap.[3] Much company gathers for feasting and games; and the nobility, going out among the palm groves, then exercises its horses. Men and women go in crowds to the orchards and the villas, celebrating, and companionably bathe now in the river and now in some pool, wherever they find it most convenient — the whole populace never tiring, each in the best way he can, of celebrating that season.

After this comes the other season of the land-winds, to which we may say our autumn corresponds, seeing in a single day that variety of temper in the air that we see among us at the beginning of October; for in the early

morning one feels the chill of the land-winds, and at midday the force of the sun tempered by the cool sea breeze. And although many fruits — and many they are — are available all year round, some do begin to ripen then, and of these the earliest; and nearly all the trees put forth fresh flowers.

The mouths and entrances of the ports open; ships come from all parts; and emerging (as the proverb goes) from a barrel with its bung sealed, one learns what has happened throughout the world; and such a one as was mourned and lamented a year before as dead gives fresh occasion for grief to those who live in these parts.

Each person leaves behind the pleasures and the soft life led during winter, and

> [1] *Cooling-pitcher* [*Infroscatoio*]. The printed edition reads *rinfrescatolo*.
>
> [2] *Old* [*Vecchie*]. The printed edition reads *secche* [dry/dead].
>
> [3] *They play and leap* [*Scherzano e saltano*]. The printed edition reads *scherzando e saltando* [playing and leaping].

[p. 323] directing his thoughts to his business, plans what he is to make of himself in the future.

The summer that follows this season of the land-winds resembles, as much as it possibly can, our own summer: though between the heat felt in ours and that of these parts, a very sensible difference is perceived. And as far as the small plants are concerned, this summer here is for them like an intense fire, for wherever there is no water with which they might be irrigated, they die out and perish as though they had never been born.

But as the season advances toward its end, all the best fruits of these parts ripen daily:[1] the *giambi* [TN: *jambul* or rose apple, *Syzygium*], shaped like ice-pears, white and pink as roses and milk mixed together, of such light

substance as cotton wool and just as white, tasting of rose-water; the *mangos* [TN: *margine* — mangoes], which in size compete with, and in shape and color rival, clingstone peaches, and in scent and flavor, when they are well ripe and of good stock,[2] surpass them by far — so that I, as far as my taste is concerned, confess never to have eaten better fruit; and one well sees it in the price, there being[3] some that sell for a ducat each;[4] the *pineapples*, which resemble in shape a pine cone the color of gold, and give off such a scent in the room where they are kept[5] that one desires neither musk nor ambergris, with the flavor of strawberries and sugar mixed together, cool and juicy, and of such delicate[6] and subtle substance that one has no sooner eaten it than one feels the extremities of the limbs tingle; the *jackfruit* [TN: *giaca*, the jackfruit, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*], which ripens at that time, large and ovoid like a very great melon, with a rind of diamond points, and is filled inside with a substance not unlike melon, whose seeds are certain chestnuts that, cooked, are very sweet[7] to the taste; the *cashews* or *laghi* [TN: *cagru* or *laghi* — likely the cashew fruit], the tamarinds, the *ambole* [TN: likely *ambalams*, the hog-plum], and a thousand other fruits that, while available all year round, in that season give the greatest abundance.

And because in these parts so remote we do not lack some of the delicacies of our own lands, at this same time grapes come to us from the *Balagate* [TN: the *Balaghat*, the Deccan plateau above the Western Ghats], land of the Moors, of very fine stock and in quite reasonable quantity — but not so many as to be common to the general populace.

[1] *Daily* [*Giornalmente*]. The Capp. manuscript has *generalmente* [generally].

[2] *When they are well ripe and of good stock*. The printed edition reads: *when they are of good stock*.

[3] *There being* [*Avendoci*]. The printed edition reads *essendoci*.

[4] *Sell for a ducat each*. The printed edition reads *are worth a ducat each*.

[5] *Are kept* [*Si serrano*]. The printed edition reads *si tengono*.

[6] *Delicate* [*Dilicata*]. The Camb. manuscript reads *delicatezza*.

[7] *Very sweet* [*Dolcissime*]. The Camb. manuscript here too reads *delicatissime* [most delicate].

[p. 324] After these delights follow, as repentance follows the wandering of the senses, infinite and long illnesses, vexatious and difficult to cure — both because of the temper of the sky, which does not let the weakened regain strength, and because of the lack of Christian physicians (for there are many Gentile ones, and none of them good);[1] as well as[2] of medicines suited to our constitutions.

And the end of the year having now come, each man resolves what he wishes to make of himself; because since the Portuguese settlers of these parts lack landed property from the fruits of which they might sustain themselves, they must think — going out and traveling to this and that place — of procuring the means[3] to sustain life for themselves and their families. Whence one sees at that time all the ships coming out of these ports: these going northward, and those southward.

And then, because of the absence of their husbands, one sees few women shutting themselves up[4] with their children to a small, straitened, and modest life; and many who have long awaited that time, like dogs let off the leash, squandering all the means of their house,[5] purchase unchastity[6] for themselves and for their daughters, showing what a woman without shame can do, where there is no fear to hold her within the bounds of decency — if any fear at all can suffice in such women[7] to keep them from following their appetite.

The season having passed, winter returns and the ports close. And I, who

already think I have tired you with these topics,

[1] *There are many, and none of them good*. The printed edition reads: "There are many, but few of them good."

[2] *As well as* [*Come*]. The printed edition reads *e* [and].

[3] *Of procuring the means* [*Di procurare rimedio*]. The printed edition reads: "that they may be able, going out and traveling to this and that part, to procure the means."

[4] *Shutting themselves up* [*Inserrarsi*]. The printed edition reads *rinterrarsi* [burying themselves].

[5] *Of their house* [*Sua*]. The printed edition reads *loro*. And similarly below: *their daughters*. The printed edition reads *lor figliuole*.

[6] *Unchastity* [*Impudicità*]. The printed edition reads *impudicizia*.

[7] *Can suffice in such women* [*Puote bastare nelle cotali*]. The printed edition reads *può bastare a queste tali*.

[p. 325] closing this letter of mine, I beg you to continue the enterprise of the P. [TN: likely a literary work] that you have begun and that I so desire; and in addition, to keep me in your regard as that servant of yours I have always been;[1] and in the number of these desires to be counted is Orazio Neretti, who kisses your hands and commends himself to you.

From Cochin, the 1st of January 1586.[2]

Your Lordship's

Most affectionate servant.

[1] *That servant of yours I have always been* [*Di quel vostro servidore che io son sempre stato*]. The printed edition reads: *di quel vero servitore, ch'io vi son sempre stato* [that true servant I have always been to you].

[2] The Camb. manuscript here adds: "Sealed on the 26th of February, with the

second ship.”

XCVII. To Cavalier Piero Spina, Knight of Malta, in Florence. Published.[3]

He speaks of the ebb and flow of the sea, and makes some observations on the compass, on the position of certain constellations seen during navigation, and on the geography of those countries. He also touches on certain matters regarding the clove trade of the Molucca Islands, and speaks likewise of the commerce of China, Arabia, and Ethiopia, and of the artillery found and cast in the Indies; and finally mentions the voyage made by a gentleman of the court of Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, dispatched by the Pope to Ethiopia.

I could not express to Your Lordship the joy your letter gave me, received with the fleet that came this year: which, seeming to understand how much pleasure I would receive from the good news of your health, allowed itself to be placed upon one of the 3 ships that came this year, out of 5 that departed from Lisbon; and of these three it came on the first to reach Goa on the 20th of October, hope already fading, as the time passed, of having news of those parts of ours. Praised be God, that in general the news was good, and may it please Him to send it[4] to us always such, even though we are unworthy.

> [3] Collated with the manuscript copy Capp., no. 80.
>
> [4] *And may it please Him to send it* [*E li piaccia mandarcele*]. The printed edition reads *e le piaccia mandarle*, where the *le* refers to *Vostra Signoria*, that is, to Spina — with whom the unworthiness that follows has nothing to do.

[p. 326] Of our tedious and long voyage, Your Lordship has heard the cause of the difference between the other ships of our convoy and ours. Does it not seem to Your Lordship that I lie — I mean what I came to write

to you (which I did not remember) — about our pilot having kept to the left hand, closer to the coast of Ethiopia, and not rightly, in my opinion and that of all who travel those seas? For that land, in that climate called the coast of Guinea, is a land of death and of calms, where keeping close to shore the currents run against that course marvelously; so that in two days we once went back more than 50 leagues. Let Your Lordship add that in fact our ship was slower under sail than any of the others; for being at that latitude, one of our ships overtook us and passed ahead — at nightfall she was ahead of us about half a league off the bow. That night we lay without steering,[1] the ship going as the water turned her; and the other, the following morning, had vanished; and since at every small change in distance the horizon shifts, that one found its wind which carried it on, and we remained in that bad fortune.

As for the ebb and flow of this sea, Your Lordship should reckon that it is the same as that of the entire Ocean, rising and falling every six hours in general; though there are some places where there are terrible differences, as in the river of Cambay and in the inlet of Diu, where in a certain part the water rises[2] so suddenly, with such force and ruin, that whoever is found there[3] and is not quick goes under with his vessel; and just as it rises in a moment, so it remains dry, and almost dry land, where before the ships were at anchor.

A similar occurrence is on the coast of [TN: word missing in source], and much more frightening, which here they call *macaréu* [TN: a tidal bore — Portuguese *macaréu*], where the water boils as if it had (and perhaps does have) fire underneath; and vessels are submerged so rapidly that one can neither see nor anticipate[4] the event.

It seems to me that similar to the one at Cambay is a tidal surge in the river of Rouen in Normandy, of which I once heard tales told, but I do not recall

having heard the particular story.

> [1] *Without steering* [*Governare*]. So also in the Table of corrections of the printed edition: the text has *governale*, that is, the steering gear of the ship.
>
> [2] *Rises* [*Ricresce*]. The printed edition reads *cresce*.
>
> [3] *Whoever is found there* [*Chi vi si trova*]. The printed edition reads *chi si trova*.
>
> [4] *Anticipate* [*Attendere*]. The printed edition reads *antivedere* [foresee].

[p. 327] The tide in all[1] these parts of India produces a wonderful effect, and particularly along this entire western coast; for entering through the mouths of the freshwater rivers that come from the mountains, it makes certain navigable arms of the sea, not unlike the rivers of Aldeia Galega, Coira, and [TN: name missing] in Portugal, which serve as ports for the ships in summer; and upon and along these are[2] situated the settlements of the Indians; and through the land, from place to place, in many parts there are other[3] such channels that go from one to the other — as from this Cochin, one can nearly navigate as far as Cape Comorin to the south, and upward for many leagues, which is a wonderful convenience. Except that along these channels through the land there are kingdoms that impede passage and make it most vexatious with their tolls, which they call *giunconi* [TN: likely *juncão*, a toll or duty], which have been granted by the lords of the lands to individual soldiers, that they may live from it; whence they call the tune[4] as they please, since they have there their home and shop, and where the water is shallow, [they can use] their own hands and labor to push ahead.

On the question of the compass there would be enough to say for more than a hundred years,[5] and then one would still know nothing. What can be said now is that it varies not only by changing position in longitude — which is manifest and known to everyone — but also in latitude: for being on the

coast of Guinea, which is almost on the same meridian as the place at 44[6] degrees latitude on the southern side, where the compass makes its greatest deviation toward the northeast, in the said place in Guinea it makes no more than 2 degrees' difference, or 2 and a half; which difference, 25 leagues this side of the Cape of Good Hope, at a place the Portuguese call for this reason the Cape *das Agulhas* [of the Needles], comes to be equalized, the needle turning

[1] *All* [*Tutte*]. Missing from the printed edition, as is the other *tutta* that follows.

[2] *Are situated* [*Sono*]. The printed edition reads *stanno*.

[3] *Other* [*Altri*]. Missing from the printed edition.

[4] *They call the tune* [*E' menano la danza*]. See the note on p. 301.

[5] *Enough to say for more than a hundred years* [*Ci sarebbe che dire fino a più di cent'anni*]. The printed edition reads *ci sarebbe da dire più di cent'anni*.

[6] *44*. This number in the manuscript is 34.

[p. 328] there directly to the north; but passing beyond and coming eastward, it begins to turn toward the northwest, and goes on declining until on this coast of India it comes to differ by as much as 18 degrees, which is a quarter and two-thirds; which difference, going eastward, goes on increasing to something more than two quarters, and then decreases — so that in the land of China, if it keeps its pattern, from there onward it turns once more toward the north.

As for the distance of the Southern Cross from the south pole, let Your Lordship look at the celestial globe, reckoning that it is formed by the four stars at the hind feet of the Centaur, which are 30 degrees from the pole, and the other two stars at the front feet, one of which is of the first magnitude: these are what the Portuguese call *as Guardas* [the Guards] or the Guides, although they[1] stand to the east and follow behind the Cross. Of

the Cross itself, though so much fuss is made about it, its use is very feeble, because on a ship the observation of the stars or the sky, as the master of our ship used to say, *nao falla verdade* [TN: Portuguese: "does not speak the truth"],[2] because of the constant rolling of the ship. For if one could observe accurately with instruments — were I a geographer, I would go back to being a fish, unable to leave the water except by dying, and from there make my observations at leisure.

But concerning those two geographers Your Lordship mentions, since they are both men of great account and friends, it would perhaps not be well to enter into determining which of their opinions is the better. Mercator, in his universal hydrography, is intent on saving Ptolemy's authority; and Ortelius,[3] following the same precept, follows the reports of the moderns, who place two points, as Your Lordship says: this one at Cape Comorin, and that at Malacca, called the *Aurea Chersonesus* [Golden Peninsula], because the ancients believed that the great island of Sumatra was joined to that part of this peninsula, whence

[1] *They* [*Elle*]. The printed edition reads *eglino*.

[2] *Does not speak the truth* [*Nao falla verdade*]. It does not tell the truth.

[3] *Ortelius*. The names of Gerard Mercator and Abraham Ortelius (Ortels or Oertel) are famous. The first, born at Rupelmonde on the 5th of May 1512 and died the 2nd of December 1594, is called by Sassetti on p. 239 "the great cosmographer of these times"; the second, born at Antwerp in 1527 and died on the 28th of June 1598, was one of the restorers of geography.

[p. 329] gold still comes today…, from which gold it took its name; and there is so much of it that from Malacca, even with only a portion coming, 3,500 *cute* come every year, each *cute* being 30 and a half ounces.

But to return: the Portuguese geographers, passing the land of Malacca which on the eastern side runs almost northwest-to-southeast, place a small

gulf they call the Gulf of Siam, for a most powerful city situated on the edge of the said bay, which from the west is formed by the point of Malacca — at 1 degree latitude on this side — and from the east by another point of land they call *Gambaia* [TN: Cambodia], at 10 degrees latitude [TN: the source reads "40 degrees," clearly an error — Cambodia is at approximately 10°–13° N], where it turns to the east-northeast for a stretch of a hundred leagues, and from there to the northeast, and makes a great bay in the shape of a river where the land of Cochinchina begins: so that in this manner the three points of Mercator come to be formed.

Now this land goes running as far as the cape of Liampó [TN: likely Ningbo/Liampo, a port in China], which is all China, and from there it turns to the northwest and north, and goes God knows where to end. Among the ancients, Pliny in the second book says that that sea is continuous with the Scythian Ocean; and this amounts to saying that the land of *Bavagliaos* [TN: Newfoundland/Bacalhaos] too[1] is broken above [TN: i.e., there is a northwest passage], since he says that to a certain king of those northern Germans were given certain Indians who by misfortune had been driven into those seas — who will perhaps have been caught in one of those typhoons that still arise in those seas of China, which will have made them travel in such a way that they will not have felt the cold one must feel at 72 degrees latitude.

Among the moderns, Mercator places this opening, if I do not misremember. And there is the story of that English master [TN: likely Francis Drake, whose circumnavigation of 1577–80 was much discussed], which gives one to think; but it is not truly known by where he got out, for the sailors here agree that it was by way of the Cape of Good Hope.

Last year a story was put about that eight other English galleons had come down into China and made landfall at the cape of Liampó; and that, having

wrought great destruction, they were heading toward the Moluccas, on one of which — called Tidore — there is a Portuguese settlement with a certain[2] fortress in poor shape; and there will be, in all, about 500 souls — men, women, children, counting the slaves as well — who, being always

[p. 330] at daggers drawn, keep continually before the fortress a galleon ready to sail. The inhabitants of the island are Moors, and of the three principal parts there are two kings.

> [1] *Too* [*Tambene*]. The printed edition reads *anco*.
>
> [2] *A certain* [*Certa*]. The printed edition reads *una*.

The cloves that grow there could be transshipped, as Your Lordship says, more easily to New Spain by way of the island [TN: of the Philippines]… where the Castilians are, who having gone there in years past had begun the trade — except that the king [TN: Philip II] commanded that those same men go back and bring back all the cloves to the last stem, wishing that the spices should go this way; just as the silver, which would come here far more easily than making the circuit of the entire world, must all be registered in Spain. And the Chinese, who swallow up a great part of it, would be glad and would give their goods at a better price, for if the *reales* did not make so many stops, they would not be inflated so much in value as they are.

The Chinese, of all the peoples of Asia, are mad for silver more than in all other parts men are for gold; and since that land is most rich in all worldly goods, and the peoples most exquisite in all the arts, all the money of Asia converges there. For from there comes gold and all the other metals, except silver; silk in such great quantity that it cannot be imagined; the richest fabrics of every kind, and of all other goods such an immense sum that it is beyond count; of porcelain a treasure — for from Aleppo to here no one

eats out of anything else, which amounts to infinite money, it being more valued and esteemed here than among us.

It is marveling that among the peoples of China, of such exquisite intellects, there is no science whatsoever, except the knowledge of their laws; and the contrary was the case in this land of India a hundred years ago, where all the arts were in extreme subtlety, as the Gentile doctors show — physicians, astrologers, philosophers, and theologians in their own fashion: which arts are declining because the Moors, who occupy almost all the land, do not want scholars at their council, as though they were of the house of Norcini [TN: proverbially ignorant — *Norcini* were itinerant pig-gelders from Norcia, used here as a joke about anti-intellectualism].

The malediction of this sect [TN: Islam] began here some 500 years ago, and they went on taking possession of everything; and from them one may believe the use of artillery began, it having been found in the parts where the Moors first occupied — which was in Cambay, and in [TN: word missing], where in Diu was

[p. 331] found at its capture that great copper cannon Your Lordship saw in Portugal, with those Indian letters that call it "of God": of which pieces, but much larger, a lord called the *Zamalucco* [TN: the *Nizam Shah* of Ahmadnagar — the Portuguese called him *Nizamaluco*, from *Nizam al-Mulk*], who laid siege to [TN: word missing], brought more than one, but one among others they called the *Carappo*, the cannonballs of which stand as a marvel in all these Portuguese fortresses, being about a braccio and a half in diameter [TN: roughly 90 cm — clearly an exaggeration, but testifying to the enormous ordnance of the Deccan sultanates].

Other very old iron artillery of great antiquity is seen in these parts, which, as the Portuguese say, would not pass muster today; and a good deal of fine

artillery is scattered throughout these parts, captured from the Portuguese.

They say that a king called[1] the King of Patani [TN: likely the Sultan of Pattani, on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula], whose land is on the western coast of that Gulf of Siam, has an arsenal in which there are 1,500 pieces of pure copper, all of one size, which here they call *camelletti* [TN: *cameletes*, a type of small cannon], being somewhat less than demi-culverins, made on the model of a similar piece of the Portuguese that came into his hands, and all with the arms of Portugal: of which, however, he has no use, for he does not sail, nor on land does he have anyone to contend with, nor does he perhaps know how to use them; and because many ships come there from China, he has all the duties paid in copper, and goes on with his foundry.

> [1] *Called* [*Che chiamano*]. The printed edition reads *chiamato*.

On the seasons of these parts and the difference from ours, there would be much to say, and to enter into a subject from which I would not know how to extricate myself, because at every small distance there is so great a change that one cannot speak of it in general terms. Of what happens on this coast, I write some things to Signor Giambattista Strozzi, who being of very good intellect, I know will share them with Your Lordship, such as they are.

And because I am now at grips with the commander of the fleet bound for the Strait [TN: the Strait of Hormuz or the Red Sea], who wishes to take a galliot of mine from me, I shall answer you on the topic you raise concerning this, telling you that the Mecca and all-Arabia trade has been alive until now because of I know not what quality of the Portuguese. Who, masters of these seas, once sent — indeed kept continuously — a very large fleet on that coast of Arabia for this purpose, whence came those very great destructions of the Moors' ships: but when they were in a position to

shut down that commerce entirely, they kept temporizing; and perhaps it was not without reason, because had they completely blocked that business, they might have provoked the Turk and stimulated him to make some effort there, from which great trouble would have come in defending against it.

[p. 332] The Viceroys of this India for some time now, each during the three years of his government, make an effort to send a fleet to the Strait in search of the ships that go there from Aceh, which is a port on the island of Sumatra — from where today go all the spices and drugs that are unloaded in Cairo and Alexandria. As for this coast, there go [missing number] ships in all, and even [missing number] of these with a safe-conduct from the Portuguese, and they may carry no kind of spices except[1] a little ginger and cardamom.

Now, this year a fleet of 5 galleys, a galleon, and 28 to[2] 30 *fustas* is going there; and aboard there will be the work of ten thousand men. This fleet goes by order of His Majesty at the request of the Persian, to carry out from there whatever the said Persian shall command: it seems he wants to strike at some Arab, I know not who or why. Meanwhile, if it finds some prey to take, I promise you the soldiers are as desirous[3] of it as they are needy; but the game will not be child's play, for those ships from Aceh, being richly loaded, carry 400 and 500 fighting men, and they want to see it through four and seven times over, and will not let themselves be taken except badly mauled. This for the war.

Of the Ethiopian trade Your Lordship writes me of, I shall tell you how that man whom His Holiness was sending to those parts — who is of the household of Cardinal de' Medici, and not a Theatine — made his way to Basra safe and sound, passing through Hormuz in that Gulf of Persia. The fleet he was traveling in was seized by certain Arab fishermen, mutinied[4] against the captain of Hormuz, called the *Nicolotti*; robbed of perhaps nine

hundred thousand *zecchini* [TN: Venetian gold coins — a vast sum]; all the passengers killed; and this gentleman, who escaped by a miracle, was wounded in six or seven places while fighting.

He came afterward to Hormuz, and from there to Goa at the end of last April, having departed from Ethiopia on the 10th of

[1] *Except* [*Se non se*]. The printed edition reads *se non*.

[2] *To* [*In*]. The printed edition reads *o* [or].

[3] *As desirous* [*Tanto*]. The printed edition reads *altrettanto*.

[4] *Mutinied* [*Abbottinatisi*]. The printed edition reads *ammulinatisi*.

[p. 333] December. He was going from Goa to Diu, from where he would determine, based on the reports given him, whether to enter the Red Sea or go along the coast of Melinde [TN: Malindi, on the Kenyan coast] to reach a place they call *Bracca* [TN: likely Barka in Eritrea, a staging point for travel to Ethiopia], with the caravans overland, as he had planned — from which plan he was dissuaded upon being told that on that road there went certain savage black men called *Gallas* [TN: the Oromo people, then expanding aggressively in the Horn of Africa], who spare no one, since all other peoples are their enemies. They cut off the natural member from those they kill, and like a rich jewel wear it on the arm, on the neck; and some by a thread dangle it from the nose, which for this very purpose they wear pierced: to such an extreme does reason descend in men.

But returning to the land of Ethiopia, no trade is more difficult in this part than that one. The cause is that in the end they are Negroes and *Cafri* [TN: *Kaffirs*, a Portuguese term for non-Muslim Africans], which means men without reason; and they allow the Moors to occupy all their seacoasts, both within the Red Sea and along the coast of Melinde [TN: Malindi]: which Moors, most jealous of this union between those Christians [TN: the

Ethiopian Christians] and these [TN: the Portuguese], watch this route marvelously well. And the Jesuit Fathers, who in these parts can do more than the kings or anyone else,[3] struggle even to see letters from certain of their Fathers who are stationed there: so that, as regards that Dominican Father, few dealings will pass between us.

I would desire, in the service of the Roman Church and of Cardinal de' Medici, who is protector of that province, that this gentleman should get through; because, although he goes alone, I believe he could produce some effect of importance.

For the news Your Lordship has been so kind as to give me, I kiss your hands. By way of Hormuz we have since heard of the death of our Lord Pope Gregory [TN: Pope Gregory XIII, d. 10 April 1585], and the elevation of Montalto, called Sixtus [TN: Pope Sixtus V].[4]

From here I have by way of recompense nothing else to say to Your Lordship, because the affairs of these black people are black, and not worth troubling oneself with, because, being black, they stain. You will do me a most singular favor by giving me news and commanding me, so that I may know you keep me in the number of your most affectionate servants; and I, as such, shall go on praying Our Lord God for all those joys you desire.

From Cochin, the 20th of January 1586.

[1] *Would go* [*Anderebbe*]. The printed edition repeats *entrerebbe*. [TN: This footnote refers to the preceding page's text.]

[2] *They cut off the natural member from those they kill* [*Mozzano il membro naturale a coloro ch'essi uccidono*]. The printed edition reads: *Mozzano essi il membro naturale a coloro che uccidono*. [TN: This footnote refers to the preceding page's text.]

[3] *Can do more than the kings or anyone else* [*Più non può nè i re nè nessun*

altro]. The printed edition reads *più che non ponno i re, nè alcun altro*.

[4] *Montalto, called Sixtus*. Sixtus V (Felice Peretti, originally from Montalto but born in Grottammare near Fermo), created pope on the 24th of April 1585, fourteen days after the death of Gregory XIII.

[p. 334]

XCVIII. To Francesco Valori, in Florence. Unpublished.[1]

He writes to him jestingly, reproaching him for his silence, and excusing himself for not speaking much of his own affairs; of which Giovanni Bondelmonti, who returned the year before, must have given him a full account. Meanwhile he continues to tell him of his constant trips from Cochin to Goa; his poor fortune; the great danger of falling ill in those parts and the utter lack of remedy; trade impeded by new laws; his ever-living desire to return home.

Most Magnificent Sir, my most honored,

I thought that in becoming a merchant you had lost that former title of yours;[2] but it seems one may repeat that saying — not to put it now as that fellow did: "You wouldn't even seem like anybody."[3] Can it be — and yet it is — that you have not written to me, or that it did not cross your mind to have the letter you wrote me copied, so that I would not be left high and dry? Oh, go and keep track of other people's children! That poor fellow did not do so last year, who wrote me two, even though I had failed to write to him the year before.

All the news you might have given me this time would have been most dear to me — those, I mean, of your affairs and of yourself, if they are as good as I suppose; for all the rest matters very little, and one hears it at a trot or on the rebound: the marriage of the Infanta of Spain, the death of Gregory and the creation of Sixtus, and such things. But the particulars about friends — if they themselves do not write them, who will?

You have done me two wrongs: the first, deprived me of the pleasure of

seeing your handwriting; the second, that lacking the matter and the topic, I shall converse with you that much less;[1] since of my affairs and the things here, our Signor Giovanni Bondelmonti will have given you a sufficient account, he having returned last year; and I trust he will have arrived safely and told you oh! how many things — about the living, the people, the animals and the plants, and then the navigation — so that you and the other men can have little more to desire from here, for he was a most diligent investigator; and, what matters greatly, his things were to be shared only among certain friends, so that the more fell to each.

> [1] Autograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana.
>
> [2] *That former title of yours*. For that infirmity of his hands — real or metaphorical — also alluded to at the end of the present letter and on p. 210.
>
> [3] *Nimo*. An old word, still living among the peasants of the Val di Nievole: the same as *nessuno* [nobody].

> [1] [Body text] *That much less* [*Quel meno*]. If the other adverbial expression *quel più* (as our author already wrote on p. 130 and here himself, nine lines below — besides the ten examples given by Gherardini in the *Supplemento a' Vocabolari italiani*, vol. IV, p. 761) means "as much as possible," "all the more," "more than ever," this one, *quel meno*, will mean the contrary.

[p. 335] Since his departure I have remained as usual during the winter (winter of the sort I describe to Signor Giovanni [TN: Strozzi]) in Goa; here for about a month now; and in a month and a half back to Goa again — so that my situation seems to me like that riddle that says: "Breast upon breast, what dangles does the deed; it enters dry and comes out wet, and makes the women goggle[2]" — guess what it is;[3] when I was a boy they told me it meant the well-buckets. No less than they do I go up and down, and this merry-go-round will last as long as God wills. If I were drawing up something from these trips as they do, the evil would be less; but I do not know what it will be, for it already seems to me that the custom has died

out whereby the vines were tied up with sausages,[4] or

> [2] *Goggle* [*Gogolare*]. *Gogolare* for *gongolare* is the subject of annotation 85 of the Deputati on the *Decameron*. As for the riddle of the well-buckets, it calls to mind one by Buonarroti [TN: Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger], of whom another was cited on p. 296: "Two twin sisters / Meet each other often on the road: / Now we kiss, now we trade slaps, / But we stay embraced all the while."
>
> [3] *Guess what it is* [*Elle le*]. Written according to pronunciation. In substance it would be: *l-e, le* [i.e., "it is, it is" — the answer prompt].
>
> [4] *The vines tied up with sausages, etc.* The well-known fancy of the Land of Cockaigne, originating from Boccaccio's tale in Novella 3, Day 8 [TN: *Decameron* VIII.3, the story of Calandrino]. So too the aforesaid Buonarroti in a *Capitolo*, also unpublished, in praise of the Crusca: "Where every vine is bound to the stake / With sausage, as fame reports, / And the weeds grow of emerald," etc.

[p. 336] that the owls there shat cloaks, as was said of Calicut — where I went last year, and I did not see that king gathering monkeys in his council either, but rather a heap of wretches like himself; so that no good was to be done with his affairs, even though I was fit to burst from the heat walking over a sandy waste that leads from the seashore to his house. If he catches me there again, let him call me what he likes — I forgive him.

So, to return, I believe it will be necessary to resign oneself to living from here on more or less as the past has gone: for you may be certain that between my last will and that of Luigi Capponi there will have to be a great difference; and that will be quite fitting, because I would not know how to dispose of things in the way he did — at which everyone seems content, which is a remarkable thing. May God be thanked for all, and may He grant the singular grace of fulfilling in me the desire and prayer of Thales: that the mind be sound in a sound body — which in these parts is a singular grace, where there is little recourse for such necessities. For beyond

bloodletting, in this land — especially for one who does not resolve to take certain concoctions of these Gentiles, God knows what they are — there is no other remedy for one's troubles. This is as regards the infirmity of the body, for that of the mind is here, as in all other parts, when it is of the bad sort, without remedy. That of the purse is likewise a diabolical illness, and for some time now given up by the doctors; and given certain new laws of these lords [TN: the Portuguese authorities], who do not want anyone to trade in any of these places where reasonable profits were made — because they say they were left with no trade at all — the thing has worsened greatly. So that an honest man who was not embraced by the infirmity of your hands [TN: a joke about Valori's well-known ailment or laziness in writing] would kick his feet in the water and come home — which I shall go on thinking of doing, before very long, so that, besides the danger of not arriving alive, one might on returning be able to spend two hours together talking, even if it were around that little wall of the fig tree in the garden at Campi, at your brother's villa.

To say exactly when is not possible now, it being necessary to wait for the decision from Portugal, whether Signor Giovanbattista Rovelasco[1] will have returned to take a part in the pepper contract; in which case I cannot fail to serve him for a couple of years, until he sends another man here to do as he wishes. If he has not taken a part in the contract, it will be another matter, for I shall leave here sooner.

Go on thinking in the meantime of the means necessary to cool the wine and water, for I am coming in so thirsty[2] that, since I left home, I promise you I have not drunk a sip that tasted good to me; and above all make sure you have a house on the route of the procession, so that one may watch the *tantafere*[3] [TN: likely procession-goers or pretty girls — Marcucci debates the meaning] pass by with some comfort.

But what accounts am I making? Will you not have children who will want to stand at the door, and who will already be beginning to treat us as old men? But let it go.

Your brother-in-law Tommaso Bondelmonti has left us: may Our Lord have gathered him among His elect. And you, who through that other marriage connection will have entered into grandeur, will no longer remember the poor, especially those who are 12,000 miles away — who nonetheless always love you with all their heart, and pray God for your every happiness.

From this city of Santa Cruz de Cochin, the 20th of January 1586.

I commend myself to you with this letter, as it is not copied in the least.

> [1] *Rovelasco*. On p. 210 (a letter also autograph) this surname is written with two *l*'s.
>
> [2] *Thirsty*. Said perhaps in a double sense, for the natural and the academic thirst; for which see note 2, p. 164.
>
> [3] *Tantafere*. At first glance, it would seem to mean what we would call pretty girls; but I imagine that Sassetti with this word, though clearly written, may have meant *cantafere*, or given it the same meaning. Now, since the word *letanie* [litanies] is sometimes taken to mean processions, or rather the people who processionally sing litanies and other prayers, as Dante says in *Inferno* XX, verse 9, so *cantafere* could be understood as those companies (whether of men or women) who in processions intone devout songs.

XCIX. To Baccio Valori, in Florence. Published.[1]

He tells of having sent the Grand Duke of Tuscany some plant seeds and some Indian medicines; and speaks of the botanical garden he has made in Goa, and of the study he was making of the simples of that country, their properties and virtues, and finally of the doctrine of the physicians of Malabar and their manner of treating illness.

Most Illustrious and Excellent Sir,

Since two of the five ships that departed from Portugal last April have been lost en route[2] or turned back, I am without letters from Your Lordship. It is true that Michele Saladini of Pisa has given me news of your state, telling me that His Most Serene Highness had given you the government of that city of Pisa.[3] I reckon that this will have occurred so that Your Lordship might enjoy that air, which will perhaps be of less harm than our delicate Florentine air: and if benefit has come to you from it, I shall have the greatest satisfaction in this.

I wrote to you briefly last year, and sent you a letter for Signor Piero Vettori, in which I gave him an account of many things of these parts; and since[4] from Florence the news tells me nothing of him, I reckon I shall have the great grace that you will have found him alive — which will be a contentment so great that I could receive no greater. If I see yet another letter signed by him, and if God gives us life, I intend to write to him once more for the coming year; because having set one of these Gentile physicians on the track of the knowledge and cultivation of simples, I have this year been examining certain plants and medicines, of which I send seeds to His Highness, with what little I have been able to learn of them in a short time.

I have for this purpose bought a garden in Goa, where I plan to put as many as a hundred of the most famous plants of these

> [1] Collated with the autograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana.
>
> [2] *Since two have been lost en route* [*Come sono rimaste per el cammino*]. The printed edition reads: "Two having been lost on the way."
>
> [3] *Given you the government of that city of Pisa*. He had been Commissioner there since 1584, since Bonciani in a letter of the 20th of October of that year, from Madrid, congratulates him on this post.
>
> [4] *Since* [*Come*]. The printed edition reads *perocché*.

[p. 339] parts, for there are many with a reputation for being marvelous. And indeed of one here in Cochin, which they call the *herb of Malucco* [TN: likely a species used in traditional Malabar medicine], I have had to make the trial upon myself, and I have found it excellent in healing a wound that had opened on my foot from a blow received aboard ship — the healing of which in this land is an endless business — and I was cured in three days by this herb, marvelously.

And on this subject, which so delights Signor Piero [TN: Vettori], I shall write him something that will be shared with Your Lordship; just as you will share what I write this year to messer Bernardo Davanzati, to whom I send a little discourse on a certain medicine that these black people use here — an excellent thing for fortifying the stomach and consuming phlegm. Of which medicine I shall send by a ship departing in a few days a box to Lisbon, so that they may send it to the said messer Bernardo to share with Your Lordship.

And as you will see, these Gentiles have here their own Dioscorides, their Hippocrates, and all their other Doctors, whose science is very concise.

And if in any matter, speaking of universals, I have found a disagreement with our sciences until now, it has been in the method: for where we begin *a notis nobis* [from things known to us], they begin *a notis naturae* [from things known to nature], having this as their principle in natural science: that everything that is, is either intellect or intelligible; and from this they proceed to their distinctions.

And as for medicine, they go about it very sensibly; and the first thing is that in every treatment they attend to the correction of the active humors — phlegm and choler; and for this reason they do not much approve of bloodletting, showing that as a passive humor [TN: blood] it cannot violate nature. They alter with syrups of pure water, putting in certain medicines of their own that they carry with them, adding them in powder at the time of taking. They have purgative medicines of the most excellent kind, by their account; and unless it be in Christian subjects, they use neither rhubarb, nor aloe, nor scammony, nor our other medicines.

They have one intention more than our physicians, because after the alteration they give purges to evacuate, and they give certain medicines that by their own virtue extinguish the evil quality in the offending humor; and they are much pleased with this term that I have taught them, of *occult quality*, which they call by a proper name in their language meaning the same thing. In this

[p. 340] intention of theirs it seems to me they are quite often deceived, and that the patients treated by them in this manner, appearing to be cured, have relapsed and died — experiencing against them the aphorism of Hippocrates, poorly observed by themselves: *concocta medicari* [TN: “treat what has been concocted/ripened” — the principle that treatment should follow the maturation of the disease].

They think they can cure tertian fevers without any other evacuation or alteration by syrups, by giving a certain ground wood that they call here *Pão de Cobra* [TN: Portuguese: "snakewood" — likely *Strychnos colubrina* or *Rauwolfia serpentina*, used in traditional Indian medicine against snakebite and fevers], which means "wood against serpents," and which is most powerfully bitter. I send a piece of it as a sample to His Highness, and another to the Cardinal.

And, in sum, they have here a new world, *caelumque suum, sua sidera norunt* [TN: "and they know their own heaven, their own stars" — adapted from Virgil, *Aeneid* VI.641];[1] and whoever were younger and had more grounding in medicine — as I write to His Highness — would produce discoveries that could bring much benefit.

I have been, from the first time I embarked, intent on tracking down the true cinnamon in such a way that the characteristics attributed to it by the ancients, as regards its proper qualities, may all be recognized in it; and with much expense and labor I believe I have found it: but my certainty, such as it is, has come upon me so close to the departure[2] of these ships that I have not been able to assemble certain writings on this subject, and send the simple itself. It will be, God willing, for next year, and I shall send it to Your Lordship so that you may see the whole; and together with our messer Neri Neri, to whom you will do me the grace of recalling me, you will examine the simple and what is said of it.

And referring to what at that time will occur to me on this subject, I shall not tire Your Lordship further. I never sent you anything of those funds of yours I had in hand, because I was waiting to come across something to my taste: but because time passes, and having sent Your Lordship a ring — which I send now — will not prevent me from sending what might present itself worthy of you, I send to Carlo Velluti a ring with a diamond in the

point and four rubies, with this ship *San Francesco*, so that from there he may send it

> [1] *Caelumque suum sua sidera norunt*. This is from Virgil in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, v. 641: but the Latin text has *solemque* [their own sun] instead of *caelumque*; and Caro's translation likewise: "And it too has its sun and its own stars" (the Elysian fields).
>
> [2] *So close to the departure* [*Tanto sulla spedizione*]. Understand: so at the last moment — that is, almost at the very point of the dispatch, etc.

[p. 341] to Your Lordship. There remain[1] in my hands 64 ducats[2] of yours, which are 387 Castilian *reales*. This costs something extra; and when I come back to take a wife, we will settle up then — which is all I wish to weary Your Lordship with in this letter. I pray Our Lord God for your life and happiness. In Cochin, the 25th of January 1586.

Your Lordship's most affectionate servant.

> [1] *There remain* [*Restavami*]. The printed edition reads *Resta*.
>
> [2] *Ducats*. Missing from the printed edition. In the manuscript it is abbreviated with certain other signs.

C. To Bernardo Davanzati, in Florence. Published.[3]

He describes the city of Goa and of Bisnagar [TN: Vijayanagara], their native inhabitants, their riches; the destruction of their very rich commerce and the cause of their decline. He speaks also of the city of Cambay, of the Great Mughal, of the pearl fishery, and generally of the trade then conducted throughout the East Indies.

The letters I have written to messer Baccio Valori and to messer Piero Vettori, which will have been shared with you, will have given you an account of those things that are seen here by those who go about this maritime India,[4] as the Portuguese do — who could not have been called by a more fitting name than that with which a black man called them the other day, who, on account of their never going a palm's breadth inland, called them *bate-praias* [TN: Portuguese: "beach-beaters," i.e., they only walk the shore], which means sweepers of the shore.

But for all that, at first arrival it seemed to me there were as many things to reflect upon as there were things that presented themselves to the senses, all being new and all[5] attractive; and custom, which extinguishes wonder, now takes away my subject, so much so that the little glass rosary beads,[6] the bells, the painted boxes, and the mirrors move me as at first the strange garments, the colors of the

[3] Collated with the Capp. manuscript no. 80, and Cambiagi. See the beginning of note 5 on p. 191.

[4] *Are seen here by those who go about this maritime India*. The printed edition reads: *are seen by those who go about here in this maritime India*.

[5] This second *all* is missing from the printed edition.

[6] *Little rosary beads* [*Paternostrini*]. The printed edition reads *paternostri*.

[p. 342] peoples, the elephants, the palms, and the other things I had never before[1] seen used to do.

Coming to know the customs of these peoples so as to be able to write something about them has been rendered[2] difficult, and almost impossible, by the absolute dominion the Portuguese have had over this island of Goa: whence the greater and better part of the Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus] who inhabited it — who were many and very learned, it being a city of study — have gone[3] to other parts. So that this city of Goa, beautiful in its situation, large in its compass, full of fine things, and rich from the trade that was greater there than in any other land, is reduced to little and always tends toward less.[4]

The cause of the departure of these peoples has been the insistence on their conversion; for since they were forbidden to study their sciences, to perform their sacrifices and devotions; since their temples were destroyed, and it was newly forbidden that they might cross from here to the mainland, as they used to do, to perform their ceremonies — the best of them[5] have gone to live in other parts, leaving behind the dregs of all those people, and those to whom it matters little to live in one way rather than another.

To this was added the destruction of the city of Bisnagar [TN: Vijayanagara — the great Hindu capital, sacked in 1565 after the Battle of Talikota], seat of the king of all this land of India, who in the maps of geography is called the king of Narsinga [TN: *Narsingha*, the Portuguese name for the Vijayanagara empire] — a name not found here. This city is larger than Cairo, according to the Moors who saw both. Its trade was so great that it could not be imagined; for enormously populous, inhabited by rich people — not rich in our fashion, where wealth is locked up in a small

chest,[6] but as Crassus and others of those times were — it consumed that great abundance of goods that came from all our parts via Alexandria and Syria; and there were sold off those many cloths and fabrics that were made in such great quantity. And the trade was so[7] great that the road from here to that city was as busy as the streets of a fair; and the profit in that business was so certain that it was enough just to bring goods there: let the merchants bring whatever they might, for in the fifteen days it took to travel overland, they would earn from here to there 25 or 30 percent, bringing back other goods from there — and what goods! Diamonds, rubies, and pearls, on which they earned much more.

[1] *Before* [*Più*]. The printed edition reads *mai più*.

[2] *Rendered* [*Reso*]. Missing from the printed edition.

[3] *Have gone* [*Si sono*]. The printed edition reads *se ne sono*.

[4] *Toward less* [*A meno*]. The printed edition reads *al meno*.

[5] *Of them* [*Di loro*]. Missing from the printed edition, which also has some other slight differences in the preceding words of this sentence.

[6] *In a small chest* [*In poca cassa*]. The printed edition reads *in una poca cassa*.

[7] *So* [*Così*]. The printed edition reads *tanto*.

And to conclude the argument, the customs duty on the horses that came from Persia[1] to pass into that kingdom yielded in this city one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty thousand ducats: of which today it yields not six thousand.[2]

[1] *From Persia* [*Di Persia*]. The printed edition reads *in Persia*.

[2] *Of which today it yields not six thousand*. So the Camb. manuscript. The printed edition reads: “which today yields not 6,000.”

[p. 343–344] To this ruin is added another destruction that took from this

city no less than what was lost through the destruction of Bisnagar, which was the destruction of the king of Cambay [TN: the Gujarat Sultanate], his state having been taken by a great prince of these parts, descended from Tamerlane, who is called the Great Mughal [TN: the Mughal emperor Akbar, who conquered Gujarat in 1572–73]: for that king, keeping a very great court and an innumerable multitude of people, always in the field under his captains, consumed as many goods as, or more than, the city of Bisnagar; and the trade was no less, there being between the one and the other this difference: that the Cambay trade was done by sea and was a little longer, and the other by land and somewhat shorter; but the profit was no less, because on the outward and return journey it yielded 50 percent in 3 months. And it had in it this pleasant feature: that when a foreign merchant arrived in Cambay, whoever he might be and of whatever nation, one of the four brokers appointed by the court would come and disembark him, and give him a house and other necessaries;[3] then he would unload all his goods on land, without his having any trouble at all,[4] and taking the invoice, by that he would set the price[5] at so much per hundred in profit; and having learned what goods he wished to carry back for the proceeds of his money, at the current prices he would bring them to him. And one might as well have brought rags or oakum, for everything would be disposed of in that manner, the merchant sitting at his ease and, as the Portuguese say, *levando boa vida* [TN: Portuguese: "living the good life"].

That Tartar aforesaid [TN: the Mughal emperor] conquered that kingdom and, leaving a governor, returned to his own country, that trade remaining destroyed as regards the goods formerly consumed there.

[3] *Other necessaries* [*Et altro necessario*]. The printed edition reads *ed ogni altra cosa necessaria*.

[4] *Without his having any trouble at all* [*Senza ch'e' ne avessi travaglio nessuno*]. The printed edition reads *senza che egli ne avesse travaglio alcuno*.

[5] *By that he would set the price* [*Per quella ne facevano il prezzo*]. The printed edition reads *con quella ne faceva il prezzo*.

These three have been the principal causes of the decline not only of this city of Goa but of all the business of India; but the first [TN: the departure of the Hindus from Goa] goes on always decreasing, so that in a short time one may expect[1] no Gentile will remain here, and consequently none will come; so that only the natives will remain — a very wicked[2] and worthless people, who live softly, in keeping with the custom[3] of the land.

It will therefore not seem a marvel to anyone who properly understands[4] these things that those great fortunes were once made in these parts that were made and celebrated, and that today they are not; rather, that everything tends[5] toward destruction. For these peoples, having set themselves — on account of such profits — to very great expenditures, have not left off as they did with the earning; and the business that remains today depends entirely upon the trade with Portugal, without which (to such a state is the thing reduced[6]) not only this city and the other Portuguese dependencies would fail, but those of all the Moors and Gentiles as well.

For the commerce that this land maintained with the Moors of Mecca having been completely destroyed — whence came the gold and silver and all the merchandise — nothing of consequence has remained but the trade with Portugal. The proof of this is that when the ships from there do not come, as happened[7] this year — from which one may suspect some disaster in the fleet, or other disorder — one sees all the merchants of these parts, Gentiles, Moors, and Christians alike, put on certain pale and downcast faces that show the poor substance[8] of this state.

This is aggravated above all[9] by the fact that business on land is universally [depressed], as is presently the case — so that only peppers are demanded

from every quarter in such a way that men set themselves, I do not say to pay disproportionate and enormous prices, but to risk death, since trading in them is forbidden on pain of life; and there is no one who does not attend to it, and does not seek to buy them, smuggle them,[1] steal them, and do every other thing to get his hands dirty with them.

[1] [p. 344] *One may expect* [*In poco tempo si può sperare che non rimarrà*]. The printed edition reads: *si può dubitare che in poco tempo non sia per rimaner* [one may fear that in a short time none will remain].

[2] *Wicked and* [*Prava e*]. Missing from the printed edition.

[3] *In keeping with the custom* [*Conforme al costume*]. The printed edition reads *secondo il costume*.

[4] *Understands* [*Intenderà*]. The printed edition reads *intende*.

[5] *Tends* [*Vadi*]. The printed edition reads *tenda*.

[6] *Reduced* [*Condotta*]. The printed edition reads *ridotta*.

[7] *Happened* [*Fecero*]. The printed edition reads *hanno fatto*.

[8] *Substance* [*Stoffo*]. Repeated shortly hereafter and elsewhere; and it is, as the Crusca explains, "a particular word denoting quantity of material in anything."

[9] *Above all* [*Massimamente*]. The printed edition reads *massime*.

[1] [p. 345] *Smuggle them* [*Tramandarli*]. [TN: The corresponding footnote text appears in the next chunk.]

The backbone of the merchandise coming from Portugal is *reales* [TN: Spanish silver coins]; of which, averaging one year with another, some eight hundred thousand *libbre* [TN: here a unit of account] come, at 40 *reales* to one gold *conto*, including the capital for buying pepper. These *reales*, although they formerly had their fixed value and passed as currency at 25 percent profit above what they are spent for in Portugal — because of the debasement of the original coinage of this Indian state — have turned

from money into merchandise; and beyond the 25 percent they formerly had in profit, they have the *agio*, which is sometimes more and sometimes less, depending on the greater or lesser quantity that comes from Portugal: for this present year, since only two ships have come here to Goa, they have sold at 42 percent *Xaraffagio* [TN: *sarafagem*, the exchange premium] — for so they call this *agio*, from the name *Xaraffo* [TN: *saraf*, the money-changer/banker — from Arabic *ṣarrāf*], which is the banker.

Of all this sum, the portion that comes for the investment in pepper must necessarily be reinvested[3] in pepper; the other monies of private individuals are spent on other merchandise, the chief being cloves and the other spices, *anile* or indigo [TN: *anile*, from Portuguese *anil*, meaning indigo dye], textiles, and gemstones, with which things five ships are loaded every year that depart from here to carry there the aforementioned riches — of which, in this land of India, nothing grows but pepper, of which some twenty-five thousand *cantara* [TN: a *cantaro* was a unit of weight varying by region, roughly 50–60 kg] can be loaded every year. The cloves come from the Moluccas, as you know; the nutmeg and mace from Banda; the indigo and textiles come to us from[4] Cambay [TN: in Gujarat]; the rubies from the kingdom of Pegu [TN: in present-day Burma/Myanmar]. The finest diamonds come from the northern country by a very long journey; and it is a marvel to see one of these Negroes appear here naked, save that a wretched rag covers that part of the backside that

[1] *Tramandarli*. The printed edition reads *trabalzargli*. [TN: This footnote and the next refer to Part 27's final text.]

[2] *Della prima moneta di questo stato d'India*. The printed edition reads: *della propria moneta in questo Stato dell'India*.

[3] *Quella che viene per l'impiego de' pepi, in pepi s'ha a rimpiegare*. The printed edition reads: *quella che viene per l'impiego de' pepi? si ha da impiegare in pepi*.

[4] *Di*. The printed edition reads *del*.

[p. 346]

cannot be seen, carrying with him eight, ten, and twelve thousand ducats in stones. And because along the roads they are often mistreated by robbers, so that the merchandise may not be found on them, they place it in a small copper tube, and this then inside their rectum;[1] and thus with it they travel fifty, sixty, and ninety days' journey. These merchants come all year round, and at all times, according as they learn there is demand. But the other merchandise that comes by sea has its determined season, which is called here *Monzao* [monsoon], which lasts the whole summer, that is from September to June; half of which time is for coming, and the other half for returning.[2] Vessels in the three months of June, July, and August must stay and watch the rain, and shut themselves[3] inside the ports: so great is the storm, and the fury of the waters and of the winds that blow through this sea, which cause this phenomenon — which will seem strange, and whose cause is very difficult to discover.[4] At the coming of winter, the winds from the south begin to blow, by which the sands of the sea bottom are stirred up and form a barrier at the mouth of the ports that the Portuguese call *Barres* [bars], and they raise them in such a manner that not even one of the small boats that ply the Arno could pass through: but then as the weather opens up from mid-August onward, the northwest winds begin, by which the sands are stirred up again and settle back into their place, leaving the harbor mouths navigable. Now the vessels that depart from here for various parts begin to leave in January — these being the ships for Portugal, and they have time to depart until the 15th of February at the latest; and they all depart from Cochin, along with the galleon that goes to Mozambique, which departs from Chaul [TN: a Portuguese-held port north of Goa] and carries textiles. In March the few ships that go to Mecca depart, which belong to Moorish merchants, natives of this land, who send them with

license from the Portuguese, lords of the sea; and they may not carry any spices, save some ginger, and this with license. They load rice, coconuts — that is, Indian nuts — coconut oil, and such merchandise of little substance,[5] on which they earn so much that

> [1] *Dentro nel sesso*. Or *del sesso*, as the printed edition has; that is, inside the anus. [2] *Tornarsene*. Printed edition: *andarsene* [to go away]. [3] *Bisogna starsi a veder piovere, e serrarsi*. Printed edition: *bisogna stiensi a veder piovere, e serrarsi*. [4] *Trovarsene*. Printed edition: *trovarne*. [5] *Stoffo*. Here it would not indicate (as was noted on p. 344) quantity, but rather value; and it may thus have transformed into *stocco* [i.e., worth, substance]. On p. 348 it would also seem to mean sale, marketability.

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it covers the cost of borrowing money on bottomry and freight at the risk of the lender at 50 per 100;[1] and seven or eight small vessels go from these nearby places, which are called *Pagheis* [TN: a type of small coastal vessel], which carry about[2] four hundred *salme* [TN: a *salma* was a measure of capacity, varying by region]. But from Dabhol [TN: a port on India's western coast], which is a land of the Moors, and from Cambay, many go, and more than one departs from that great island of Sumatra — the part they call the *Dacen* [TN: Aceh, the northern tip of Sumatra] — whither go the *gauri* peppers [TN: a variety of pepper] that then reach us by way of Alexandria; and they also bring from there all the other spices, including the cinnamon that comes from the island of Ceylon. From Cambay they bring textiles and indigo; and from Dabhol whatever spices they can. In April all the ships depart for Bengal, for Malacca, and for the Moluccas, and for China and for Hormuz. To Bengal go those small cowrie shells that are found in the islands of the Maldives, calling[3] them here *Caurim*, in Portugal *Búzio*. Our women use them, pounded, macerated, and distilled, to make a cosmetic wash. There they serve as money for buying

certain things only, such as the trifles of the *bazaar*[4] and, at most, chickens; for to purchase proper merchandise they want Castilian *reales*, or *larins* [TN: a silver coin, originally Persian, widely used in Indian Ocean trade]. These are a coin of the finest silver, each worth as much as one and a half *reales*, and minted in Persia; and being so sought after in all these parts, all these Negroes make them, and throw in no more than three carats of base metal, as that fellow of ours from the Casentino used to do.[5] To Malacca go many textiles from those of Cambay, and the same monies; and to China, *reales* and nothing else. There used to go much coral; but today, whatever the cause may be,

[1] *Di pigliar danari sopra corpo, e noli a rischio di chi gli dà loro a 50 per 100*. Printed edition: *di pigliar danari sopra a corpo, e noli di risico a chi gli dà loro di 50 per 100*. [2] *Opera*. Printed edition: *sopra*. [3] *Chiamandole*. Printed edition: *chiamante*. [4] *Bazarro*. This is not the bezoar stone, which is also called *bazarro*, *belzuar*, *bezoardo*, etc., so extolled again in these letters, and so debunked by Redi in his *Esperienze intorno a diverse cose naturali dell'Indie* (Florence, 1671), from which some brief words are cited on p. 355, note 1; but here it means a place assigned to commerce, a square, a market: whence perhaps came our present-day *Bazar*, where goods are sold at fixed prices. Bartoli (*Asia*, lib. IV, cap. 18) says that "not far from the city [of Hormuz] there was a famous place where all the merchants gathered at daybreak to do business. It was called *Bazar*." [5] *Quel nostro di Casentino*. Guido, Count of Romena, who together

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this trade is ruined.[1] The galleon that goes to the Moluccas to buy cloves carries textiles and other things necessary for the sustenance of those Negroes: for as there is no other export but cloves, there is no use for money, except for the Portuguese who are stationed there. Once all[2] these ships have departed, winter sets in with its rains and most tempestuous winds, but not cold: of which Pliny made mention in his chapter on Taprobana, which is the island of Ceylon, saying that those peoples do not

sail from the solstice until the equinox, because that is winter in that sea. The return of all these vessels begins at the start of September; and the first to arrive are those from Mecca, which bring almost nothing but *zecchini* [sequins, i.e., gold coins] and some *ciambellotto* [camlet, a fine fabric]. After these come the ships from Portugal with *reales* and wines of that same land, and malmsey wines, and some cloths and *rasce* [a lightweight fabric], but not many, for there is now little demand for these goods; and the galleon from Mozambique with 2,500 marks of gold dust, which is worth 90 seraphins[3] [TN: a gold coin used in Portuguese India] of 6 *reales* per mark. Consecutively[4] come the vessels from Cambay with the merchandise mentioned above: at the end of December those from Bengal with textiles and rice. After these the ships from Malacca with all the spices, except for[5] pepper; for although there is much of it there, none of it comes here. They bring aloe wood, bezoar stones, and some diamonds, which come from the islands of Java. The ships from China arrive later, and bring all the things that can be imagined, apart from spices; for from there comes silk, fabrics, all sorts of metals,[6] quicksilver, copper, brass, and gold in such quantity

> with his brothers Alessandro and Aghinolfo, around 1281, by the hand of Master Adam of Brescia, counterfeited the gold florins "that had three carats of base metal," as Dante writes in Canto XXX of the *Inferno*. [1] *Quel che la causa se ne sia, questo negozio sta rovinato*. Printed edition: *quel che la cagione se ne sia stata, questo negozio è rovinato*. [2] *Tutte*. Missing in the printed edition. [3] *Serafini*. I have written thus, also further below, instead of *xarafini*; so writes Carletti, specifying them as a coin of Goa, each worth seven and a half *giulii*; and so does Sassetti in Letter CIII. [4] *Conseguentemente*. According to the Cambridge Codex. The Capponi [Codex] has *seguentemente*; printed edition: *susseguentemente*. [5] *Fuori del*. Printed edition: *fuori che* — the same thing, yes, but cacophonous because of the two successive *che*'s. [6] *Tutte le sorte di metalli*. Printed edition: *ogni sorta di metallo*.

as much as one wants; because it is enough to bring capital to buy it, and one could load a whole ship; and it is of a certain alloy that they call *diamantes* [TN: here meaning an alloy standard, not the gemstone], and nine and a half, which corresponds to three-quarters of a carat; and it is such a merchandise that, selling it here at 140 or 120 seraphins per mark, one gains 60 per 100. From there comes alum of rock without limit, galangal, cinnabar, camphor, and porcelain, which is a very great merchandise; gilded timbers in great quantity, silks embroidered most finely, paintings; and everything, in sum, that one knows how to ask for comes from there: because if it happens that they lack something that someone desires, if one can make them understand it, they make it at once;[1] and in every kind of merchandise that comes from there, pulling along the gold, one's money doubles, when it does not become three from one. And truly, if it were not for this trade on which this part has its foundation, everything would be on the ground. At this time come the ships from Hormuz, and they bring horses, money, and a great many fruits — almonds, walnuts, dried plums, capers, and a white raisin, which is small, but not like *covanti* [TN: a type of small raisin], without seeds, which is just like manna. The horses pay half in freight, and to leave here, 40 *Pagodes* [TN: *pagoda*, a gold coin of southern India] of minted gold, which are as many gold *scudi* in gold coin; and they go to the land of the Moors and of the Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus]: but this trade has been reduced to little for the reasons stated above. This is the substance of this trade of India in general; the particulars we shall reserve for Montughi,[2] where we shall be able to tell of the manner in which pearls are fished; which is in a place seventy leagues from here, and they are extracted from the oysters that are fished in that sea for two months of the year, by diving to the bottom of the sea,[3] from which they are prized loose[4] by the diver and put into a sack that he takes up with him, which after half an hour, or a little less, he brings up full. The bottom is many fathoms deep, and the divers are

many, and every year six or eight of them fall prey to the fish,

> [1] *Di presente*. Printed edition: *di subito* [at once]. [2] *Montughi*. Or, as it is presently called, Montui (the Salvini notes: "Montui for Montughi, as *Loica* for *Logica*"), a village near Florence, and, as Varchi says (*Stor.*, lib. IX), "a delightful hill named after the ancient and noble Ughi family," where stands "the fine and well-situated palace of the Sassetti," now belonging to Gino Capponi. [3] *Del mare*. Printed edition: *del medesimo* [of the same]. [4] *Sono spiccate*. Printed edition: *sono state spiccate*.

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who cannot defend themselves from them. When the two months of fishing are over, they open the oysters, of which each diver has his own separate heap on land, and some years they find a good harvest, and other years a poor one; and the merchandise is sold for the most part[1] to these Negroes of the interior, who bind them[2] to their ears and set them in jewels. Pearls come likewise from Hormuz, which must easily be fished in the same manner; but I do not know the particulars.[3]

Now coming to my own affairs, I know not what[4] to tell you, save that I am here at the cost of many hardships endured in coming,[5] and to return will require as many or more; so that the very thought of it frightens me. It has been a particular grace both in coming and in staying, and in so many changes of air, and in so much discomfort as I feel from the sea — for it is still necessary every year to go twice from here to Cochin, which is a most wearisome voyage — to have always been well. It is true[6] that I have never neglected that part of medicine that treats of preserving health, now with a purge, now with some other such diligence. As for my means, if I were of a nature to whine, I would say that things have gone coldly; but I am of a patient nature, having been accustomed since childhood to lack the necessaries, inasmuch as almost immediately after being born I nearly died of hunger. From Portugal I sent you some cinnamon water, which you

praised. Having come here where it grows, or quite nearby, I have not sent you any, because having read Mattioli in the discourse he makes on cinnamon, I gave myself no thought about it: for having taken a fancy to make a water with cinnamon in the manner he teaches, I found it very good and

> [1] *E la mercanzia si vende la più parte*. Printed edition: *e la maggior parte si vende*. [2] *Legano*. So also the printed edition, which however in the *Tavola di alcune varie lezioni*, etc., gives *levano* [take, lift], adopted then in the Reggio edition. One can bind pearls to the ears, and bind them in jewels; but if one can equally well say *levarle agli orecchi* [lift them to the ears], certainly not *levarle in gioie* [lift them in jewels]. [3] Let me be permitted here to recall the *Perle* [Pearls] of Giovambatista Roberti, a didactic poem nearly forgotten, but always beautiful. [4] *Che*. Printed edition: *quello che*. [5] *A venirci*. Printed edition: *a venire*. [6] *È il vero*. Printed edition: *È ben vero*.

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better than this one, which is worth much, costs little to falsify, and is not to be found pure. I have found here a most excellent medicine for strengthening the stomach, and which is precisely the antidote to phlegm. I shall try to send you a box of it, to be divided between you and Signor Baccio Valori; and with it will be a copy of what I have gathered about its virtues. Having tried it on myself, I found it marvelous. If I learn that it is something that benefits you, I shall continue thereafter to send you some: I say continue, if you let me know that you want me to send it another time; for from that point on it will be time to furl the sails, or rather to spread them, and depart from here. In this time it will be most dear to me to hear[1] good news of you and of your children, who by now must be men fit to give you all the contentment I wish for you, and I pray God that He grant it to you.[2]

Written in Goa, on the 9th of November 1585. Sealed in Cochin, on the

22nd of January 1586.

Most ready to serve you.

CI. To Lorenzo Canigiani, in Florence.

Previously unpublished.[3]

He speaks of Bondelmonti returned from India, very well informed about the things there, and much aged. He describes bezoar stones and porcupine stones, their medicinal properties, and a terrible disease called mordaxi*, against which they were believed to work marvelously.*

Shall we then marvel, and I nearly said complain, that others do not write long letters and give reports of the things here, and of what goes on and what one does; and shall we never say: "It is as far from my house to his as from his house to mine; and if I do not write to him, why should he write to me? Or if my letters did not reach his hands, why will he not take it upon himself to suppose that I may not have written to him?" — Indeed,[4] you ought to reckon in this way, if you want the accounts to balance, without blaming others. That other one who remained in Spain has done as much to me. What do you think? Say it: we are all cut from the same cloth.

> [1] *Sentire*. Printed edition: *intender* [to learn]. [2] *E prego Dio che vi dia*. Printed edition: *e prego che Iddio vi dia*. [3] Apograph in the Magliabechiana Library, Class. XXXVII, Cod. 209, at the end. [4] *Messer sì*. Thus I have interpreted the *mersi* of the codex.

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Signor Giovanni Buondelmonti came away last year in good health and fine condition; but the name *Vecchino* [Little Old Man] no longer suits him, which is to say a young old man who is beginning to grow young again; rather he is almost at the full maturity of his old age — which is to be well beyond the peak — and his beard will have shown you as much; for even

though he trimmed it, even though he shaved it down as low as could be,[1] one can nonetheless see that he was born before the day before yesterday. I hope with the first ships to hear of his arrival, at least in Portugal; but when he is with you, what things there will be to learn! How many will be the questions, and of what sort! He goes very well informed about everything that can be known; he carries paintings of the fruits, the Brahmins, the Malabaris,[2] their wives, and everything else, so that for a good while I imagine the poor man will be a martyr: and easily, in order to draw some good sense out of it, you will need to make the best of a bad lot, and resolve once and for all like a gentleman to go and spend four days at Campoli [TN: a country estate near Florence], because in Florence you will have neither time nor place, nor will you be left alone.

Last year I received a very good letter, as to its quality, and full of fine news: I do not want to say that this year I have felt the lack of it, as regards not having known the affairs of the world, for I have known them only too well, and there has even leaked through to us here, I know not how, the news of the pope's death [TN: Pope Gregory XIII died in April 1585], which occurred some weeks after the dispatch of the ships: but I lack certain particulars that nobody could give me but you; and how keenly I feel their absence, I cannot say if I do not complain about that fine virtue which in Castile they call *sussiego* [haughtiness], which El Villamore praised greatly in Alonso de Salinas. What would it have been to make two copies of one poor little letter? For you would have seen that, as Ser Rocco said to that pupil of his, nobody dies from it. But let us leave that. Last year

[1] *Che se la incancherasse bassa bassa*. Unless it is a blunder by the copyist, we shall have a new expression for signifying the weakness of one who is ashamed to show the flowers of wisdom, as Synesius called them in his eulogy of baldness. [2] *Malanarì*. Perhaps *Malabari*, that is, the peoples of Malabar.

I wrote to you, but I did not properly answer a question you asked me about some bezoar stones,[1] because I did not have them and could not find them, nor do I have them, nor have I found them. Now go ahead, and say and do whatever you like, for I do not care one whit: what I mean is that I have found only one, which is not very large, but for its size is very beautiful. I am sending it to that good fellow Velluti, so that he may forward it to you; and because I imagine she would be afraid to travel so far alone, I have given her the company of a small porcupine stone. I, to tell you the truth, believe in these marvels of bezoar stones up to a certain point; but since I have taken them I know not how many times, and never found myself either better or worse for it, I cling more willingly to theriac, mithridate, aloe, agaric, and rhubarb, whose effects are recognized even here. It is true that these know-it-alls here make a distinction between stones and stones; because they say that those extracted from dead goats, or found dead one, two, or three days, are of no virtue, and that those are worth more that are removed when the goat has only recently been killed: that good ones are those extracted from animals still half alive; that the Negroes who extract them are so practiced that they can tell them by sight alone, although here in India their identification has become very difficult;[2] because whereas, when they first arrive, they have a certain roughness and rawness, here they give them a polish that, being the same on all of them, does not allow one to see the difference between the good ones and the less valuable: that liveliness is the best sign they have; and those that have all these little bands, they say, are marvelous against poison, for they cause vomiting, sweating, and the evacuation of the bowels. God preserve us from the need. The other stone, that of the porcupine, appears to be somewhat better, for it has in itself, besides its appearance, some sensible quality, one immediately discerning a color that goes from yellow to ashen gray or thereabouts,[3] in some strange way; and when taken in hand, if they are good ones, it seems as though it wants to stick. The

[1] *Pietre bazari*. See Letter XLVII, to Baccio Valori. [2] *Difficile*. I believed I had to correct in this manner the *di perle che* [of pearls that] that the manuscript says. [3] *Altorno*. That is, *intorno*, approximately; but written as *al torno* [Italian: *altorno*].

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way to test them is to place them on the tip of the tongue and let them do their work, because in very little time they fill the mouth with a bitterness so powerful and vile that one shudders all over: and the way to use it is to take the stone and place it in a glass of water, and leave it there until the water acquires that bitter quality, which, provided there is not too much water, happens in short order. Now, this water they say has more virtues than betony; and against poisons, it is the least important effect it produces. What I can tell you is this. There runs here a certain disease that kills a man in exactly 24 hours, which is called *mordaxi*,[1] which is an upheaval of the stomach and of the whole body, so that one retches, and the body expels all the humors and blood, so that one dies of it: and it proceeds from eating too many sweetish fruits, too much pork, too many preserves, and drinking too much water;[2] whence the poor stomachs, when they have endured far too much, give way altogether. The symptom that identifies it is that the patients immediately lose the sense of touch in the outer parts of the body, so that however hard you pinch them or prick them with a needle, they feel nothing. Last year, coming from Goa here to Cochin, in the first fortress of the Portuguese that they call Honavar [TN: a port on the Karnataka coast], the king's scrivener, who was traveling in that ship, collapsed there as if dead, with all the symptoms of that disease. Filippo Magrera the Milanese, who was with us, happened to have some of this stone, and putting it in water and giving it to him to drink, in less than an hour he was as well and happy as before. This year, coming for the same purpose from Goa to here, and being at another fortress they call Mangalore, already dispatched from

here and about to embark, people came telling me that a man lay dying in the house. This was a sailor of the ship, who was already confessing and at death's door. I had with me this very little stone that I am sending you, and placing it in the water, I gave him two draughts, with which he rose to his feet at once and went about his pleasures; and because he

> [1] *Mordaxi*. "In India (says Carletti in his *Viaggi*) it is properly called *Mordicin*. And this is a type of colic that strikes in those countries with such force and violence that it kills in a few hours." It seems to me our cholera pure and simple! [2] *E bercisi molt'acqua*. As has happened to us.

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was a poet, he sent to ask my permission to compose in my praise…[1] These are the experiences witnessed of this stone, in which I believe somewhat, since it shows some quality of its own, in respect of its bitterness. I sent one, in the first year, to His Most Serene Highness; this year I send one to Your Lordship, to keep it thus, while not failing to lend it to anyone who should have need of it, as charity requires: for when this one is used up, if I send you no more, you will do without. Now pray to God that this ship upon which this letter goes may arrive safely, because I am not even making a copy of it, and taking no other precaution. If you received that celestial globe, and should you sometimes need to send me a message, Canopus or the Southern Cross or some other star that can be seen from here will do you the service. Keep well, and keep me in your good graces as much as you can, and do not mind that I do not fully satisfy the obligation I have to you and to the Signor Ambassador; but be assured that I love you tenderly. Farewell.

In Cochin, the 23rd of January 1586.

Your most affectionate servant.

The porcupine stone is not to be lent, but one sends the water already made bitter. Let this reminder serve you, and do not trust doctors or credentials or intrigues; and if you have dealings with Signor Strada,[2] see a bit what he has to say about it.

> [1] *Di fare in mia lode*…. There follow three or four words in Portuguese, indecipherable; but one gathers it was some gallant poem. Even then, and even so far away, that fashion prevailed, so well mocked by Passeroni: "That all that happens in our days / Is straightway seen in laudatory lays." As for those medicines, reputed so marvelous, let Redi answer: "I tell you as a thing tested and true, that many famous medicaments from Africa, from the East and West Indies, brought to Europe with great expectation, have not held up in my hands, and have proved of no value in practice." [2] *Il Signor Strada*. Named also on p. 23: and this was the name given to the physician Bartolommeo Gatteschi.

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CII. To Alessandro Rinuccini, in Florence.[1]

Previously unpublished.[2]

He excuses himself for not having written in two years, and rejoices at finding in him trade conjoined with learning. He speaks of the death and a work of Giorgio Bartoli, and of the book of the Cortegiano *by Baldassarre Castiglione; then of his own affairs, with a detailed account of Indian merchants, exchange, usury, and the manner practiced in selling, counting money, and signifying numbers by movements of the fingers.*

Most magnificent Sir.

If I had to deal with that good woman who had no logic, I would seek by argument to make her believe that my not having written to you for the two years that I have been in India came from being very much your servant, and from not wishing to give you trouble in reading my letters, thinking they might be irksome to you; with other arguments that might seem suited to prove my point: but where such trifles have no place, I must think of something else. I do not know if a *similiada*[3] [a comparison, a simile] that occurs to me to give you will suffice as I should like. You have very many friends abroad, in Rome, in France, throughout Spain, and in Germany; and even though I know nothing about it, I would wager the chilblains of the Agghiadato[4] [the Frost-Bitten One] that among them there is someone who regularly goes a good four or six dispatches without sending you letters, and you probably make no fuss about it. I have let two pass without writing to you: is it really so great a thing? When this

[1] Although the name of the friend to whom this letter was written does not appear in the codex, the mention made in it of the family connection with Orlandino Orlandini, who married his sister, should suffice to make us believe

him of the Rinuccini family; for the Cammilla of Francesco d'Alessandro Rinuccini was married to Orlandino; and of her six brothers, Carlo and Folco died young, Tommaso was a priest, Pierfrancesco took charge of family affairs, Ottavio and Alessandro cultivated letters (the former having been the inventor of musical drama, unless indeed the Lucchese Laura Guidiccioni preceded him; the latter a good poet too; and both friends of Sassetti): so that I would not fear having guessed wrong in addressing the letter to this last, as the one whom our author most often mentions by his proper name and by his academic name of *Ardito* [the Bold]. [2] Apograph in the Magliabechiana Library, Cod. 209, Class XXXVII. [3] *Similiada*. Noted on p. 168. [4] *Agghiadato*. Ms. *Agliadato*, that is, Federigo Strozzi. See also the heading of Letter LIII, and p. 289.

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fine reason does not suffice you, I do not know what to do. Arrange it as you like, and say that I am this and that, provided you do not call me *smemorato* [scatterbrain] (he wanted this name[1] in the Academy, etc.), for I would not stand firm on that count on any terms: call me rather a put-it-off-till-tomorrow; and just consider that I am a man who goes about India, where all the faults and excuses will be locked away; and so there will be no need to discuss this matter further.

Saladini, God bless him, not only with these letters received this year, but with those of last year, giving me account of those things he deems dearest to me, writes and wrote to me of your affairs;

whence I later learned of the family connection with Orlandino Orlandini, who married your youngest sister, your brother's departure for France, his return there and going back again, and the union in your person of trade with learning; and consequently, the continued good success of your business, which since from time to time it must bring some vexation[2] and loss, I was glad in the end that it weathered the ill fortune: indeed, in those affairs that passed through my hands and Felice's, being of little importance in comparison with your other dealings, [the losses were less]

than in other ventures where one trades on a larger scale. And to return to you, it will have been seen and will be seen what you yourself wrote to me in Lisbon, that letters [i.e., learning] do not hinder other exercises of the mind, but give them perfection; so that I rather suspect the other merchants (lest they send out the ban of the Norcini)[3] will want to set themselves on the same path. This much for business.

Of the Academy, Bonciani wrote me last year rather good news, but at the time of writing this letter I have not yet received his letters nor those of anyone else who speaks of it: I think well of it. I now feel the death of our Messer Giorgio Bartoli [TN: a Florentine scholar and linguist] more than usual, learning that he has written well on the reform of the alphabet, adding

> [1] This name was held by one of the Guicciardini. [2] *Qualche disgusto*. Between these two words there is another that cannot be read clearly: it would appear to be *colpa* or *elio* [fault or…]. [3] *Il bando de' Norcini*. Ms. *de norcino*. However it may be, I can say no more than that also on p. 330, speaking of the Moors of India who did not want learned men as counselors, he adds: "as if they were of the house of the Norcini." I believe furthermore that the following *incominciarsi* should be read *incamminarsi* [to set out on a path].

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some new elements to it: a fancy no less of Castelvetro than of the Alterati, who although they have examined many things in various subjects, did not lay their hands on this one nor on another, in which reason demanded that they make many observations, because some of the best and eldest among them have thrown themselves into it: I speak of *Il Cortegiano* [The Courtier], about which that count wrote (I happened to find it here on the counter of a man who sells matches); and not having ever read that work, the new courtliness of the Aspro[1] made me dip into it to see how he got along with this sort of garment; and as a great citizen used to say, *omnibus*

computato [all things considered], it seems to me that his shins are a bit too long for that exercise: for where one cannot have him with all the proportions required of a most handsome gentleman, he would prefer him on the small side rather than tall; because those who cannot be called handsome are called graceful. This quality or quantity I believe must be common to every courtier, and therefore I speak of the Aspro; for as to the other parts, not yet knowing what manner of courtier he wants to be, one cannot see whether it suits him well or not: for everything that is written in that book seems written to form those courtiers who are meant to serve in instructing princes to make them magnanimous, brave, just, and wise; which does not seem to me the office of the carver nor the cup-bearer nor the pantler, and much less the cellarman; and in sum, in a court there will be but one of these courtiers, and they will serve up to a certain time, and then are no longer needed. Yet that book is entitled *The Courtier*, as if it were for all.[2] I do not know what the Vario[3] will think of it. But let us leave this, and come a little to my own affairs. I came here, as you heard: the why, more or less, you will have told yourself. I am still here; and since the pepper contract is finished, and Rovellasco has not returned to take a part in it, it seems to me that one must think of some other

[1] *Aspro*. Francesco Bonciani, in the Academy of the Alterati. [2] *Quasi che sia comune a tutti*. To this slight censure of Sassetti's — that Castiglione wrongly attributed to all courtiers the qualities that only one can have — the many other praises by Tasso make a good counterweight, in his Dialogue entitled *Il Malpiglio, overo de la Corte*. [3] *Al Vario*, Antonio degli Albizzi.

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course, and gradually resolve to go home. I am certain that in the matter of fortune the same thing will happen to me as happened with letters to that chaplain of Santo Stefano, who upon going to university said that either he would learn or he would get the canker. When he returned, and was asked

how things went, he replied that he had got the canker. It will be, as Castruccio said, whatever God wills. As for the things here, in these past two years I have gone about writing now to one, now to another, various particulars: nor would there be any lack of various subjects to continue with, if the gentlemen of letters and learning had not departed from this island of Goa, where there was once a *studium generale* [university] with many colleges in the manner of ours, and an almost infinite number of students; from whom one could learn with difficulty, but with some foundation of truth, their laws and customs; for the other men, being merchants, can give no account of themselves or of their doctrines: and therefore, of that part which is visible to everyone, which is trade, I shall tell you some small things; and although all the world is the same country and the general ideas are common, the particular little differences very often afford some pleasure.

Here the merchants are the third rank of people in order of nobility; for the first are the learned, or those who, descending from such, ought to be; the second are the men of arms, and men noble by deeds, from which order the king was formerly chosen; the third are the merchants, who are commonly called *Ciattini* [TN: *Chettis*, a merchant caste]; the fourth are the laborers and peasants; the fifth are the enemies of the Poet [TN: i.e., Dante's sodomites; a euphemism], and those who go by the lesser ways; I mean the…[1] This class of merchants embraces an infinite number of people, various in quality; for those who sell lentils and figs at retail are as much merchants as those who trade in pearls, diamonds, and rubies; and the ones as much as the others are so filthy and miserly that for a single *basalucco* [TN: a unit of currency] (400 make six Castilian *reales*) they make the most tremendous scenes and uproar. And for all that, in no place are monies handled as they deserve to be except here; for they are counted on the ground, and to count them one calls a Negro, or whatever is even lower

to be found in the house; and there they stay many a time.

Now, just as among us at home there are bankers, so here there are bankers too, and among them there are very wealthy men, and

[1] One reads *iechiuti* [illegible in source].

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others who, to keep their counter open, have only as many *basalucchi*[1] as suffice to change a coin of gold or silver, taking the premium, from which they sustain themselves; which is now more, now less, according to the abundance of gold or of coin. These bankers are called *xaraffi* [TN: *sarāf*, money-changers], the *x* serving in the Spanish manner for *s*.[2] From this you may recognize the name, there being mention — I know not whether in Boccaccio or in the *Novellino*[3] — of so many *saraffi* that were given, I believe by Saladin, to I know not whom, for by this name money used anciently to be called, just as today a certain very poor coin is still called so that the Portuguese mint here in Goa, called *xarafini*,[4] which the Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus] would take. The business of these bankers is buying and selling coins minted in other parts, which have no fixed price, but now rise, now fall, according to the needs brought by the trade carried on in those parts where such coins circulate; these men sometimes making a monopoly[5] so tight that whoever must pass through their hands feels it. Their second business is exchange, practising it in the manner of Ser Ciappelletto;[6] (whence that fellow used to say: "These Lombard dogs[7] do most damnable business") lending by the week; and they charge as interest (as a relative of mine used to say) two per cent per month as the norm, and with the pledge in hand: nor above this is it reckoned a sin among them, but no one is found who will stand firm. The others who deal in merchandise, carrying it from one place to another, are rich on the slimmest of capitals: for to make a purchase, however large, it suffices to have of one's own 600

or 700 ducats, with which they invest eight, ten, and twenty thousand, borrowing at interest as described above the sum they need; and taking with them an agent of the money-changer who

> [1] *Basalucchi*. Here it says *bamrucchi*. [2] *S*. The codex, with manifest error, has *sei* [six]. [3] *Nel Boccaccio o nel Novellino*. I do not have this mention of the *saraffi* present in either of the two books. [4] *Xarafini*. That is, as I wrote on p. 348, *serafini* [seraphins]. [5] *Monipolio*. It is actually written *monipodio*. [6] *Di ser Ciappelletto*. Codex: *in fra Ciappelletto*. It is easy to confuse *ser* with *fra*: except that, to allow *in* for *di* in the original writing, one must suppose some omission of a word in the copy, such as, *per via di dire*, "in which Ser Ciappelletto practised it": the well-known protagonist of the first novella of Messer Giovanni [Boccaccio]. [7] *Questi Lombardi cani*. Words from said novella.

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lent them the money at interest, wherever they wish to sell their merchandise, there they sell it and pay the money. But because the affairs of this trade are all very uncertain, it happens quite often that they lose their small capital, and remain indebted for the whole of their lives; whence the guilt of the usury of those who lend[1] them money is partly cancelled. From this you may consider, as I was telling you above, that all the world is one country, and the same things are done proportionally everywhere; for our merchants too most of the time live by nothing other than doing business with other people's money, with loss ensuing on all sides.

The merchants who travel the most are those who trade in gems, many coming who spend[2] three months from where they set out to here; like those who come from Agra, seat of the Great Mogul [TN: the Mughal Emperor], situated at the foot of Mount Imaus [TN: the Himalayas], where the Indus and the Ganges are separated by the slightest distance. It is true that the distance is not so great that it should take[3] so much time to travel it:

but since these people are very slow, and consume a good deal of time in their ceremonies, being unable to eat unless they wash their entire person, they travel little in a day; for as a rule, that land lying at 28 degrees of latitude, almost to the northeast of this one, the distance in a straight line would be about 300 leagues: make it 400, which is 1,600 miles. The cause of their slow going is the small expense they incur, for there will be some who make this entire journey on 3 seraphins,[4] living on dreams and alms. The trading with these people in their wares[5] is done in a fantastical manner, for neither do they bid above the other's offer, nor does the other offer above their asking price: a broker stands between them with a cotton cloth that they wear as a sash and covers the hand of the seller, and with

[1] *Di chi presta*. The *chi*, or something similar, is lacking in the manuscript. [2] *Pongono*. And perhaps also *passano* [spend]; but certainly never *pagano* [pay], as the ms. has. [3] *In andarlo*. It would indeed be a fine use of this verb with the accusative case; and if one says elegantly *Andar la sua via* [go one's way], why not also *Andare un luogo* [go a place]? What is elegance in the end (exclaimed Cav. Angelo Maria Ricci in a letter to a friend of mine), if not the boldness of expression? And how many elegances do we not have (I think) that are nothing but blunders of copyists! [4] *Xarafini*. Supplied by me for the incomprehensible cipher of the ms. [5] *Mere*. Merchandise: as for the rest, I can scarcely make it out, unless one ought to read: "The trading… is done in a fantastical manner," etc.

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his hand he makes him signify how much he wants without speaking. In the same way he then takes the hand of the buyer, and has him signify how much he is willing to give; and so with their hands he whittles the thing down, staying at a point where a deal can be struck, without telling the one what the other asks or offers, until he has the deal in hand; and then, joining the seller's hand and the buyer's hand, and placing in their hands something of what is being sold, he strikes down upon it with his own;

which is called here “giving the slap,” and in this he declares the price. But when the parties are far apart on the price, they part[1] without knowing what the other asks or what the other offers; whence it happens that the buyer, not being well informed whether the broker is a rogue, takes a tremendous beating.

The manner of signifying with the fingers and the hand is this. Each finger, taken by itself from the last knuckle toward the tip, signifies one; from the middle knuckle, ten; the whole finger, a hundred; with one squeeze, a thousand; with two squeezes, ten thousand; with three, a hundred thousand; with four, a *conto* [TN: 100,000, or sometimes a million], and consequently four fingers signify four. A finger tapped on the palm of the hand signifies fifty; stroking the little finger against the hand [signifies] six, the ring finger seven, the middle finger[2] eight, and the index finger nine. A half is signified by stroking a finger crosswise; a quarter, by stroking the finger crosswise and then stroking again through the middle of the part that remains on the outside; and thus they signify whatever they wish.

The other Gentile [TN: i.e., Hindu] merchants come here from Cambay and from the interior, which they call *Balagate* [TN: the Deccan plateau, from *Bal-ghat*, above the Ghats]. The bulk of their merchandise is cotton cloth, indigo, and *anfione*, or if you prefer, opium, which the Moors of this region commonly eat, without which they suffocate in a short time. You will find mention in Pliny in his description of India of this people whom he calls the *Opiophagi* [opium-eaters]. Their trade is entirely overland, their laws not permitting them to sail except a short distance and hugging the coast, it being necessary for them to disembark and wash their whole person if they wish to cook their rice, which is their bread; otherwise they cannot eat it. And therefore when they sail in the

[1] *Portano*. It would seem it should say *partono* [depart], but thus the ms. clearly

reads. [2] *L'infame* [the infamous one]. One finds in Persius *infami digito*; in Martial *digitum sed impudicum*; and that the middle finger is called *impudicus* by physicians is confirmed by Priore Orazio Rucellai. As for why it has received the name of "infamous," (he will say with Monti) it would be decent to keep silent.

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manner described above, and remain some days without going ashore, they eat fruits, butter, sugar, and other things that have no need of cooking; and thus they get by. They are in their dealings of little truthfulness, fickle as leaves, timid as monkeys, distrustful to such a degree that they fear the air will carry away what they have. This in general: for there are also to be found among them those who have a bit more of the man about them; and with these people one must deal and transact one's business; and to do so one must wait until the she-mule has turned her tail toward her rump, and that the cock did not crow, or that along the road they did not encounter a blind man or a lame man, or a dog, or other such things: for they live by augury,[1] no differently than Messer Imberiale dal Balzo used to do.

All these customs of theirs, by their variety and difference from ours, may give delight; but for the rest I see in them no great refinement, nor is it worth growing old in this part of the world, but rather to seek to retire and die at home: which I desire most ardently. I do not know whether the condition of the place can be taken as excuse for the common desire to live. We shall see if God gives me the grace to bring myself back among friends safe; for if then my spirit settles without seeking new things, one may say that one spoke truly; but as long as this is delayed…[2] to put into action. Remember how much I am indebted to you, and let that which obliges me to love you make you continue to hold me as your own, as you have done. Orazio Neretti kisses the hands of Your Lordship, begging you to keep him in your good graces. May Our Lord God prosper your every wish.

In Cochin, the 1st of January 1586. Held until the 6th of February.

And I commend myself to you most tenderly.

Your servant.

> [1] *Agura*. The thirty-third of the *Cento Novelle Antiche* [Novellino], where the here-mentioned lord is spoken of, gives *algura*, that is, augury — both forms, though not usable, lacking in the Crusca dictionary; and *Imberal* in place of *Imperiale*. “Messer Imberal del Balzo, great castellan of Provence, lived much by augury in the Spanish manner.” [2] The space I have left blank is entirely covered with inconclusive marks.

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CIII. To the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Francesco I.

Previously unpublished.[1]

He describes the city of Calicut, the palace and person of the Zamorin [TN: the hereditary ruler of Calicut], and the manner in which he was received by him. He then discusses the differences that had arisen between that prince and the king of Cochin, the desperation of the Amocchi militia in combat, another prince called the Zamaluoco, and the grave danger to Giambatista Dritti, a gentleman of Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, in the Persian Sea, at the hands of certain pirate fishermen called the Niccolotti. He speaks finally of the seeds of plants that he has procured and already dispatched to His Highness together with a most beautiful Chinese pavilion and similar curiosities, and of the expedition of the Castilians of Manila for the conquest of the island of Ternate with 600 infantrymen, setting forth the cause of the discord with the king of that island.

Most Serene Lord.

The good news received with the ships from Portugal that came this year, both of Your Highness and of his most happy state, is enough to keep content a vassal of his who lives three thousand five hundred leagues away. May God Almighty be pleased to grant him as much life and happiness as I wish for him.

After dispatching last year the ships from Portugal at Cochin, returning to this city of Goa, and in order to advance the peace that had previously been sketched out with the Zamorin, I passed through the much-celebrated Calicut, situated on the shore of the sea, without a harbor, at 11 degrees [latitude], where the said prince resides, who so entitles himself; and that

name signifies Emperor, which he claims to be in Malabar. His city is very large in circuit, without walls, save certain pieces of earthen ramparts[2] on the seaward side, already in ruins; a good part of the houses desolate; the inhabitants are for the greater part Moors [TN: Muslims]; and the Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus] who dwell there are among their lowest ranks, being the merchants whom they call *Ciattini* [Chettis]; for the Nairs [TN: the Nair warrior caste of Kerala] and soldiers keep to the palm groves toward the hills. The said Zamorin lives at such a distance from the city that to go

> [1] Original ms. in the Medici Archive, Strozzi Papers, Bundle XVIII, f. 7. The dictation was done in several stages, in Goa and in Santa Croce di Cochin, divided into two letters, the second of which is entirely autograph. [2] *Tappie*. Understand: earthen ramparts [*terrapieni*].

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there at midday in the heart of summer, and to walk upon the sand, a stout man suffers hardship. The roads by which one goes in that part of his land, which runs from the foothills of Monte Gatto [TN: a local hill range] to the seashore, make it extremely strong and almost impregnable: for they have industriously made the roads very low, so much so that in winter the country, which is by its nature liable to flooding and marshy, has the waters there so high that one cannot pass; but the embankments that enclose their fields are high and smooth in the manner of those of our plains-people, with a hedge of a most fantastical shrub; for it has neither branches nor leaves, yet is all branches and all leaves, growing one out of the other to the thickness of half an arm, with thorns so hard and so thick as pikeheads. And as a further comfort, this plant is poisonous, and so mistreats whoever is pricked by it, that a few persons standing above in the field behind one of these hedges will impede many who go along that road — by which one arrives at the palace of the Zamorin, which is in the middle of an enclosure or very large courtyard, surrounded entirely by certain rooms like

warehouses, the ground of which is all sand with some palm trees. When we arrived near his house, he, who watched us coming from behind a lattice, opened the shutter of the window and asked who we were and what we sought: at which words the Gentiles who were guiding us dropped to their knees, and with hands joined and raised like one who worships, their heads bowed almost to the ground, answered him; whereupon he gave us leave to enter.

This palace of his is low, and has within it certain small courtyards, with loggias all around enclosed by a low wall so high from the level of the courtyard that to enter one must leap up and grasp with one's hands. From this little loggia, by a wooden staircase scarcely more than a ladder, through a trapdoor as in our dovecotes or on our terraces, one enters first a bare room; and only the second, where this man sat, is paneled with wood, and he in the dark (except for the light given by his lattice) sat upon a bed raised from the ground about as high as a writing desk, entirely naked save for a cotton cloth wound about his middle, woven with pictures of their idols. The color of his flesh is much lighter than a mulatto's, tending toward

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yellow; of medium stature; rather thin than full; with the look of a frivolous man, which is then confirmed by his manner of speaking, talking so much that he gives no room to answer his questions, and so rapidly that the interpreters do not understand him, all the while making many gestures with his hands as he speaks. He wears his hair long (as do all the Gentiles of these parts), wound up and tied on top with a knot and a tassel, as nymphs are sometimes depicted: his ears pierced below and so elongated that they hang upon his shoulders, full of studs and rings set with gold, with rubies and emeralds: on his fingers many rings of little value. He held upon

his knees a cushion of *ermesino* [TN: a light silk fabric], upon which he rested his arms. Around him were his counselors, the king of Tanur [TN: a small kingdom near Calicut] and a certain other prince, all naked, girded only with a cloth, holding in hand a sword and a buckler.

The words were many, we giving him account of various things he asked about. The conclusion of the business for which I went there was fruitless; for, not being well disposed in his mind to maintain friendship with the Portuguese, having been induced to peace at the urging of his merchant vassals who were already ruined from long lacking trade, he would not condescend[1] to what was fair. The peace continues to be pursued, and now a fleet of seven galleys and seventy galliots, with two thousand five hundred soldiers, stands ready to go and build the city and fortress that the Zamorin consents to have built in a port of his called Panane [TN: Ponnani, a coastal town near Cochin], some four to six leagues from Cochin; where there is a river, a fairly safe anchorage for vessels, and from where the Moors used to dispatch a good part of the ships they sent to Mecca. This fortress is expected to keep this prince in check, so that he does not come to a break with this state whenever he sees his advantage, as he has done until now; but he, who is no less shrewd than he is fickle and ill-inclined, making the counter-move to this design, has put in the articles of peace that the fortress shall be built in the said place, which is about thirteen leagues from Calicut: but the factory and the officers of the king — namely the factor, scribes, and other people who are involved in collecting duties, licenses, and other revenues — shall be stationed in Calicut; where, having no backing of fortress or anything else, they will be completely in

[1] *Coscendere*. That is, *condiscendere* [to condescend]: which indeed is written in that way.

his hands; so that if the Portuguese make any disturbance in Panane, he in Calicut will be able to treat these others as he pleases. Nevertheless, his subjects are so exhausted and ruined that they do nothing but cry out for peace with the Portuguese, from which proceeds the security of trade. The men of war, on the contrary, do not well agree to it, for being embittered against the king of Cochin, they are certain they cannot drag out the war with him at their pleasure: for that king being allied with this state [TN: the Portuguese Estado da India], in what they call here *Irmãos d'Armas*[1] [brothers in arms]; and it being conceded by the articles of peace to the Portuguese that they may aid him without breaking the peace with the other, whenever the Zamorin is on the point of doing something of consequence against the king of Cochin, the Portuguese will intervene. And their differences are not such as can be mended: for the king of Cochin, when the Portuguese came to India, being a petty lord and ill-treated by the Zamorin, or at least held in no account, he [the Zamorin] not having been willing to engage in trade with them, and indeed having done them[2] many injuries at the instigation of the Moors who dwelt in his land; as malcontents always open the way for foreign powers, the king of Cochin received them, and began peaceful trade with them, giving them land, a harbor, craftsmen, and all the other things necessary to gain a foothold in a place where one had previously had no dealings: whence the Zamorin, embittered, began war with the king of Cochin, which has lasted in the descendants of both, and lasts to this day. The hatred between these two princes was newly increased because the person of the Zamorin was wounded, against the rules and terms of their wars, which do not allow that from the enemy camp any weapon be discharged toward that part where the person of the king or opposing prince stands: to which end the king, when in the field armed, keeps a canopy raised above his tent, visible to all the soldiers, so that no one directs arms in that direction. The reason for this respect is not any care or concern they have for the preservation of each

other's person, but for the sake of the public good. For

> [1] *D'Armas*. Perhaps *Darmas*; written *darmat*. [2] *Fattole*. I would read *fattoli* [done to them (masc.)].

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should a king die in battle, all the men-at-arms who are with him are obliged to die at the will of the successor. And this death of the soldiers is not to be a simple one and without vengeance, but rather accompanied by great slaughter to be wrought in the land of the enemy; for at the command to go and die at the will of the successor, armed with all their weapons, they move with that fury that can proceed from a desperate man, and like fire they spare nothing living, putting all to the edge of the sword, to fire and blood, until they themselves are slain. Marvels are told of these desperate men — that one of them, run through by a lance, impales himself further upon the shaft of his own accord to reach and kill the enemy: and in truth, in those parts where this curse exists and where it is feared, they are greatly dreaded. This militia, which is obliged to die at the pleasure of its king, is called the *Amocchi*[1] [TN: *Amoks* — from which the English expression "to run amok" derives; a class of warriors sworn to fight to the death]: and that prince who has the greatest number of them is reputed the most powerful: and there is among princes a distinction according to the nobility of their blood, such that some make their soldiers *Amocchi* for as long as they live, these being the most noble; and others of lower blood, such as the Zamorin, their *Amocchi* last only for a certain determined time, within which they are obliged to go and die for their prince, but beyond that time, no. It is the custom of many private individuals, for particular reasons, without there being the cause from which this curse derives, to go and offer themselves as *Amocco* to this or that king; who, as a sign that he accepts, gives him betel from his own hand, which is one of the greatest

honors one of these kings can bestow on a subject: which gift he repeats when he sends him the command to go and die, maintaining him, while he wants him alive, with a certain stipend. Great men for becoming *Amocchi* are the slaves, who being wretched, for whatever thing their lord does to them, if they can kill him by treachery, they do so; and then, certain of having to die, whatever falls into their hands they seek to destroy: and in Malacca, where such things occur, the law permits that they be killed by popular fury. Of this kind of *Amocchi* militia the king of Cochin has a great deal, which they say exceeds thirty thousand; and since he is of the Brahmin

[1] *Amocchi*. See p. 374, n. 1.

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caste, which is the noblest of all the Gentiles, his soldiers serve as *Amocchi* for the whole of their lives. The Zamorin does not have as many, and is of a lower caste. Now, for the wounding of his person, the king of Cochin excuses himself, showing it to have happened because he [the Zamorin] was not standing in the usual place beneath the canopy, whence it came about that an arrow struck him in the neck by chance.

If the war continues between these two princes, there may arise occasion for the peace between the king of Calicut and this state to be broken: for otherwise the peace suits them both very well; the Zamorin, in order to restore his trade, and the Portuguese so that the king of Cochin does not grow greater through their reputation; for having once been a petty king of few *fanois* [TN: a small local currency], he has gained great ascendancy over the other princes of Malabar, and has begun to ride upon the very backs of the Portuguese, and at times to take little care of fulfilling the obligations of the alliance. And were it not that this present king is a prudent man, and knows (as the Portuguese say) much of letters, it might

be that they would already have come to a break. And because last year a thousand vexations were made in the loading of the ships, upon our complaining to the Viceroy, he replied that he had written to His Majesty about what was happening, and that he would go along with the humor so long as it was reasonable; but that in the end let it be understood that *sine sanguine non fit remissio* [without blood there is no remission].

The other princes of these parts are at present quiet. That Great Mogul was ready to march down to the conquest of the state of a prince called the Zamaluco [TN: the *Nizam Shah* of Ahmadnagar — the Portuguese called him *Nizamaluco*, from *Nizam al-Mulk*], whose land is in this India and borders on the Portuguese at the city of Chaul:[1] but Our Lord, with the extreme drought that has been and persists in Gujarat, through which he must pass, has not granted it to him. This Zamaluco was, by caste a Moor, one of the four captains who rebelled against the king of Canara (Ptolemy calls this land Canagara; modern geographers the kingdom of Narsinga [TN: i.e., the Vijayanagara Empire], of which the capital was the city of Bisnagar [TN: Vijayanagara]), these men — with two other Moors and one Gentile [TN: i.e., Hindu] — dividing among themselves the state of their lord; whose father had conquered that state in the same manner, betraying his own king, of whose army he was a captain. Such changes occur and will always occur in these parts, because these princes give the commands of captain over ten, twelve, fifteen,

> [1] *Chaul*. On p. 346, written *Ciaul*.

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or twenty thousand cavalry not merely for one man's lifetime, but the rank passes on by succession in such a manner that those people no longer recognize[1] their true lord, except as the subjects of feudal lords recognize the first lord of the fief, or less. It is now many years since this Zamaluco

fell ill with leprosy, and wished to be cured by the bath, with which Constantine refused to be cured [TN: referring to the legend that Emperor Constantine was offered a cure by bathing in the blood of children, which he refused]; but it seems it did him no good, for having withdrawn from affairs, he has never appeared again, and three principal men of the kingdom govern the state in his name, almost like the ancient Magi in the kingdom of Persia, as if he were still alive, making the sight of their own lord cost dearly to whoever should seek it, inquire about him, or even speak of him, putting to a cruel death anyone who broached the subject, as one who seeks new things.

And because the rumor of his death spread long ago, some three years ago[2] an ambassador came to that court, a very haughty one, from that Mogul, asking those governors to see the Zamaluco. He was put off with words for some days, now with the indisposition, now with occupation, now with one thing and now with another, and finally told, as if on the Zamaluco's behalf, to deliver his embassy to those governors, and he would be well dispatched. The embassy was this: that his lord knew for certain the Zamaluco was dead, and that state belonged to him; he sent word to those peoples that they should swear him as their king. And having left there the weights and measures of the Mogul's land, with which he commanded that business be conducted, he departed forthwith; and this year war was expected, which did not go forward for the reason stated above; but one of the captains of that state, who is stationed on the borders of Gujarat, they say was ready to let him pass through.

It would matter greatly to this Portuguese state if that prince made himself master of the aforementioned kingdom; for since ambition has no limit, he will go on conquering all of India, without anyone being able to resist him; for once done with that place, there remains to the south the kingdom of the Deccan, which was ruled by another of those captains of the king of

Bisnagar, called the Dialcão [TN: the *Adil Shah* of Bijapur — the Portuguese called him *Idalcão*], who being dead, left a small little son now governed by

> [1] *Riconoscono*. Let not grammar be offended by this apparent disagreement [of number]. [2] *Ara opera di tre anni*. As if to say: it will be about three years. See more examples in the Glossary.

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an Abyssinian eunuch, his slave; nor will banners be raised so soon to undertake that enterprise before his captains hand him over without drawing a bow, the same men having wished to betray the old Dialcão when ten years ago he came to the conquest of Goa — it having remained in place because one of his most powerful captains, who had an understanding with that Viceroy, did not take it; and had he delayed much longer in the siege, he would have been stuck there, and his state would have been divided into five or six parts.

A new ambassador of this Mogul arrived here a month ago — it being customary to send one to visit the new Viceroy: he is a man of low station, and one who, if by way of trade in this embassy he could cover his expenses, would make every effort. He brought as a gift to the Viceroy — which has been seen — half a dozen fine *Achinee* [TN: horses from Aceh], of which that country has great abundance: he carries much money from his lord to spend on these fantasies from China; but so far he has shown himself less judicious than avaricious.

Giovan Batista Britti, servant of the Lord Cardinal [TN: Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici], arrived here from Hormuz at the end of last March, sent by the captain of Hormuz, to which place he had made his way miraculously; for the fleet of vessels in which he was traveling in the

Persian Sea was attacked by certain pirate fishermen, banded together, whom they call the Niccolotti, and all were robbed, the booty amounting to some seven hundred thousand sequins;[1] the people, for the most part, killed; the said man, wounded in six places, left as dead in the bilge of the vessel, which the Arabs dismantled down to the waterline.[2] He drifted at the mercy of the wind and the sea for five or six days, living like a mouse on the dates[3] that had fallen into the ballast of the boat. Our Lord brought him to an island of the Arabs called Serri, where by the *Sheik*[4] he and his companions were well received,

> [1] *Settecentomila zecchini*. On p. 332 he puts nine hundred thousand, but with a "perhaps." [2] *Fino al lume dell'acqua*. It seems to mean what we would call the waterline, that is, the line marked by the surface of calm water on the hull of the vessel. [3] *Tamere*. Judging by the sense, I would believe: crumbs [or dates]: I do not know whether it is correctly written, or whether it has a place among things pertaining to seamanship. [4] *Seque*. Here and elsewhere the ms. has *Xeque*; and I changed the *x* to *s*, not only because that consonant has no place in our language, but also because in the *Indian Histories* of Maffei, translated by Serdonati, I find this word so written, which among the Arabs signifies governor.

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provided with some carpets and other necessaries to clothe themselves — for they had been left naked by those thieves — and given what the land afforded to live on, with much kindness, or rather pity. There were some Arabs who advised that Sheik to force them to become Moors [i.e., convert to Islam], or else to kill them: from which he excused himself, alleging that he could not put to death those whom God willed should eat of his soups. He made his way thence to Hormuz, where he immediately experienced how great is the difference between those things that Our Lord works directly and those that depend on our human judgment: for having found in that Sheik of Serri, a Moor, such humanity and such clemency as could

have come only from divine inspiration, there in Hormuz — even just to be provided with a few garments with which he might defend himself against the chill of the quartan fever that had leapt upon him — he had much difficulty; and to eat he was assigned a place at the servants' table in the convent of the Augustinian friars, and he was furthermore given much grief in proving that he was not one of those imposters who go about the world. In the end, the brief of His Holiness, the letter of the Lord Cardinal, and the other things of his that were recovered miraculously and through the diligence that the captain made in this matter, cleared things up: so that the captain, having sent here everything that was found — the brief of Our Lord [the Pope] and the letter of the Lord Cardinal to the Viceroy — also sent him. Where the Arabs and the Niccolotti were not lacking to him; for notwithstanding that the Viceroy has always received him kindly, and from the first day given orders for his dispatch, the covert difficulties that have been raised against his enterprise would not be believed: so that to find a way around these obstacles, and, as they say, to get ahead of them, it has been no small labor; and at the last, when all the most important obstacles seemed to have been overcome, the men whom he had been gathering as companions for this passage were led astray from him.

The causes of these difficulties may be two: one, that it seemed wrong to some, through whose hands such business is accustomed to pass in those parts, that this charge was not given to them; of which I was given a hint by the very same persons, as if by way of surprise: the other, that various enterprises having been attempted in those parts, and perhaps not having taken a good course,

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certain errors may have proceeded from this, which those who caused them wish to remain buried there. These are conjectures that have as their

foundation the course of events. God knows the truth, to which I defer. His departure from here was to be in eight days, aboard a *fusta* [TN: a light galley] that the Viceroy has had armed for this purpose. He will convey himself from here to Diu, where they will take on a particular pilot: from Diu they will cross to the strait of the Red Sea, which is a sail of 16 or 18 days. There goes with him a Jew, who affirms that he will put him ashore at the *Saquen* [TN: Suakin, a port on the Red Sea coast of present-day Sudan], on the coast of Ethiopia, where, although it is uninhabited, the Abyssinians come to graze their cattle; and that from there they will be able to go to a monastery of friars, set on a mountain two days from the sea, from where the road to the court of the Prester[1] [TN: Prester John, i.e., the Ethiopian Emperor] will then be level and safe. This Jew had taken a Venetian there who carried letters to His Majesty, as he had been sworn in as king in this India; but the business did not go well for him, for having landed in Arabia, word of them was given to the *Saquen*,[2] where they were taken, and they had great difficulty in escaping impalement,[3] that Pasha[4] fearing they were going to Ethiopia to that king, trade with whom the Christians greatly suspect: having then been certified of what they were going to do, he let them go. If the difficulties they encountered then will have provided knowledge from which Britti may pass safely, I shall be most glad for the service of the Holy Apostolic See, and for the satisfaction it will give His Most Illustrious Lordship; and when I hear some particulars, I shall inform Your Highness.

At the end of last summer I endeavored to gather some seeds to send to Your Highness, and did little better than nothing, for what was brought together was more medicines than seeds of plants from which one might hope to see fruit grow: still, such as they were, I have kept them through this winter from the corruption caused by the very great humidity, with the much

[1] *Presto*. That is, Prester John, or, as [Sassetti writes] elsewhere, *Prete Ianni*: about whom see the note on p. 290. [2] *Saquen*. Or perhaps *Seque*. The ms. has *Suaque*. [3] *A fuggire el palo*. To avoid being impaled. [4] *Bassa*. Ms. *Baxa*. See above, p. 371, note 4.

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heat of this land, to all things. I have found here among these Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus] other Hippocrates, Galens, and Dioscorides, who treat these subjects with much refinement; and from that learned man who writes on the subject of simples in the work they call *Niganto*[1] [TN: *Nighaṇṭu*, a Sanskrit pharmacological lexicon], I have translated, through the dictation of a Gentile physician, what he writes about the greater part of the things I am sending to Your Highness, and with this letter will be that little more that I have been able to learn of their qualities and virtues. I have no doubt that if there came here someone who, with good principles of philosophy and medicine, had a good knowledge of the subject of simples, he would bring very great benefit to medicine. And a painter who knew how to draw and color the plants well would afford much delight by their appearance; for in this regard the novelty is so great that it could not be imagined; for merely to consider in one plant a leaf four braccia in length, such as the *Qua*, called by the Portuguese *Ficho* [TN: likely the banana plant or a similar large-leaved tropical plant], which is identified by Mattioli as a species of palm, seems a marvel. I never made any study in this subject, and apart from lettuce and fennel I knew few plants; wherefore it would not be very remarkable if I had included among these some things that are common there at home, for one can see this land produce almost all the garden vegetables of our parts; and perhaps many and infinite other herbs that, neglected on the mountains and in the forests, make us suppose that this climate does not produce them. I shall not cease to apply in this such diligence as shall be permitted me amid all the difficulties that exist and my

other affairs, informing Your Highness of whatever shall seem to me worthy to be set before you.

Up to here was written in Goa. Having come here to Cochin, I have little to add to Your Highness. The plan of the fortress that the Portuguese are building in the territory of Calicut is enclosed with trenches all around; whence the greater part of the fleet has departed from there with the general, called Ruy Gonçalves da Câmara, who is here with five galleys, a galleon, and a galleass (these are a little lower than galleons and longer, but in other respects are handled as high-sided vessels), with 30 *fuste*

> [1] *Niganto*. Fuller information about this Gentile scholar and his work is given in Letter CX.

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[light galleys], caulking here in this river of Cochin to go to the mouth of the Red Sea, they say, by particular order of His Majesty, who sends this fleet there in the service of the Persian [TN: Shah Abbas of Persia], who will send them there the orders for what they are to do. They will go to winter in Hormuz, and cannot return before a year from now: if in the meantime some of the vessels that come from Aceh, the port of the island of Sumatra, laden with pepper and other spices, should fall into their hands, these soldiers are ravenous for them. May Our Lord direct everything in His holy service.

Last year I sent almost nothing to Your Highness on account of the monies of yours that remained in my hands. This year two vessels came from China, but the junk, on which were various things of mine, has disappeared: and yet the two Most Reverend [bishops] of Malacca and China were aboard. God keep them safe.

I found here a pavilion of white *ermesino* [light silk] with its little blue cap, embroidered like the Chinese mantles (where this too was made), but of much greater richness, and so well finished that the embroidered things seem more to be valued than real ones. It has its bedspread and bed-curtain, a pillowcase for the bolster and two for two small cushions: all so well finished that it seems to me truly that no other piece so rich and so beautiful ever left here; and if I had had to request a thing worthy of Your Highness in this kind, I would have asked for nothing other than this. Its original cost is a thousand of these seraphins; and its gilded wooden bed-frame, eighty. It goes in the ship *Sant'Alberto*, which will depart from here in a few days, addressed to Lisbon to Andrea Migliorati, so that he may send it to Your Highness: and although in the *Casa da Índia* [TN: the Portuguese customs house in Lisbon for Indian goods] they take many similar things, and say it is for the service of His Majesty, I trust they will abstain from this one.

I am likewise sending to Migliorati various jasper stones that I had ordered from Cambay, from where I had also ordered pieces of agate and of the other stones of the cups that I sent last year to Your Highness; and likewise the box of simples will go in the said ship, and in the next one the other; and with the same ship I will send him the account of everything, drawing on the depositary for what I shall need for Your Highness, who will do me the grace of giving license for

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the settlement of the draft. Migliorati of Lisbon, by order of the depositary, has sent me three barrels of mail [TN: *maglia*, chain mail armor], which I have orders to sell as property of Your Highness; and until now I have not managed to, because apart from the soldiers not having enough money among them to clothe themselves, this type of armor is impracticable here, on account of the very great heat, besides its being impossible in any way

to protect it from rust: and when in this year's fleet none has been sold, one may judge that there is no demand for it. I shall apply therein the diligences required in the service of Your Highness, as I shall write you every year. The captains of the *fuste* and the *fidalgos* [TN: Portuguese minor noblemen] who have something to spend are accustomed to a breastplate proof against shot; but these are sold here for much less than where they are made. This is all I have to say to Your Highness with this letter of mine. I pray Our Lord for the increase of his state and the highest felicity.

From this city of Santa Croce di Cochin, the 23rd of January 1586, *a nativitate*.

Most Serene Lord.

What is written above is the copy of my letter that I wrote to Your Highness with the ship *San Francesco*. I have since loaded aboard this ship *Santo Alberto* the chest in which goes the pavilion and its furnishings, purchased for Your Highness. It is addressed together with the gilded wooden frame to Migliorati of Lisbon, so that from there he may send everything to Your Highness: loaded in the same [ship] is a small chest full of seeds and medicines gathered this year in Goa; and in the same chest is the inventory of the packets, and with this the explanation I have been able to draw from them. In the ship *San Lorenzo* will go another similar chest, addressed to the Lord Cardinal. Should it winter in Mozambique, as departing a little late it might, the Lord Cardinal will lay claim to half of these, in which case he will do me the grace of sharing them.

To the depositary I send the entries of Your Highness's account, to which for the balance I have drawn 376 ducats in the form of [a draft on]

Tovaglia; of which he will give particular account to Your Highness, with whose permission he will honor the draft. The jasper stones will come on the ship *San Lorenzo*, as I shall inform you.

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From Malacca there has come a junk (this is a vessel, built in the manner of the Chinese, that sails these seas: it carries three rudders, and either end serves as its bow); it departed at the beginning of December, and brings news that the Castilians of Manila, which is a port on the island of the Luzones [TN: Luzon, Philippines], in number of 600 infantrymen, aboard frigates had gone to the Moluccas to conquer the island of Ternate, the king of which was a rebel against this state; which king, having waited for them to force him, decided to come to terms with them: which they refused, in order to sack the place.

The discord between the said king and this state was this. The father of this present king was such a friend of the Portuguese that he was arranging to send his son here to learn the Christian doctrine and to observe more closely the customs of the Christians; and as he was supreme over all the other kings of those five islands, all were friends of the Portuguese. On this island of Ternate, with the king's consent, the Portuguese had a fortress, in which 200 soldiers were stationed, and at the regular times the captains went there. Fortune would have it that there was once a captain little apt to govern; and those who were present in those times claim that what happened was at the instigation of a Jesuit father; which if it was so, it would have been for a good end. This captain, having one day summoned the king to the fortress, as he did many times, and after having treated with him at length, accompanying him to the gate of the fortress, there in cold blood, and without any cause ever being understood other than the exhortation of that good father, killed him. Whereupon the entire people

rebelled, and that captain fled, leaving the Portuguese households there at the mercy of that Moor; who, succeeding to his father's kingdom, took possession of the fortress, and to the Portuguese who remained did no harm, except to hold them as prisoners on that island, until they escaped with the help of the king of Tidore; who, because of this event, having become a friend and given a fortress to the Portuguese, became sovereign over himself.

The new king of Ternate in his words conducted himself as a vassal of the king of Portugal, saying that he held that fortress for him, waiting for the charges against his father to be sent, on account of which that outrage had been done to him; and because these charges did not exist, he let it be understood that if the offender were given into his hands, he would return the fortress and the trade to the Portuguese, which

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was already interrupted. In the meantime, that captain who committed the crime was seized and sent there as a prisoner: but having died on the way, the good king of Ternate came to declare himself more clearly — that he would not have taken any more punishment upon that captain, had he come into his hands, than he himself had taken from the dagger that struck his father; that in demanding the malefactor he was demanding the one who had been the cause of the deed, for he well knew that the captain could not have done that unless sent. And as this other manner of governing was to be more profitable to him, he has never again wished familiarity with these Portuguese: toward whom he has not shown himself an open enemy either, but his cloves he has always sold to the Javanese; and it has been almost a miracle that the greater part of the galleons that have departed from India since that time to go and load cloves have either been lost or have been unable to complete the voyage, and have always had some ill fortune.

Three years ago sixty Castilians went there, and wrought great destruction among the Javanese they found. Now having returned in good number, they will want to take possession before they leave; whence to His Majesty will come the greatest benefit, since all that he used to draw from that trade had passed to the benefit of the Moors of Java and of his captains of Malacca.

If before this fleet is dispatched there is certain news of it, I shall inform Your Most Serene Highness. The fleet that was prepared for the Red Sea, and then for the Persian Gulf in the service of the *Xatamàs* [TN: *Xatamás* was the Portuguese rendering of *Shah Tahmasp*; by 1586 the reigning Persian shah was Muhammad Khodabandeh (r. 1578–1587), but the Portuguese continued to use the name generically], is still in this river of Cochin; and as the time for that voyage is running out, it gives cause to believe that there may be some other purpose — which might perhaps be to go to Aceh on the island of Sumatra, which would be the best thing in the world; but the force is small and insufficient, unless there are further provisions at Malacca, of which there is no news. May Our Lord direct everything to a good end, and grant Your Highness the highest felicity.

From Santa Croce di Cochin, the 6th of February 1586, *a nativitate*.

Of Your Most Serene Highness,

Most faithful vassal.

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CIV. To Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, in Florence.

Previously unpublished.[1]

He asks him a favor so as to be able to see Malacca, the Moluccas, China, Manila, and New Spain; and to this end also entreats him to obtain from the king of Castile not merely permission, but a most ample patent to pass, with some special provision, to the West Indies.

Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Monsignor.

I am writing to Your Most Illustrious Lordship in another letter of mine about the things here and the customs of these peoples. I now take the boldness of writing you this letter, to be seen by you alone, so that if it shall seem to you that you can favor me in my desire, which I shall signify below, as I trust and hope, you will do me the grace; and should it seem otherwise to you, let not this idea of mine be seen by others, it being perhaps too grand considering my means, but readily put into effect with your favor.

Your Most Illustrious Lordship, at the foot of the letter with which you favored me this year, invites me to return to my native land: a thing more desired by me than any other, in order to enjoy the presence of His Highness and of Your Most Illustrious Lordship. The scarcity of worldly goods and the desire to see this part of the world have kept me here until now, and some other consideration will keep me still a little while longer: for finding myself obliged to Giovambatista Rovellasco, who after God was the cause of my satisfying this desire of mine to see these parts, I cannot fail to occupy myself in his business, if he should return to take a part in the pepper contract that is now to be made in Portugal, for the space of three to

four years at the longest; but if he takes no interest in the said contract, I plan, if God grants me life, to depart from here within two and a half years to return home.

But on the return I would wish to grant to my senses the experience of what remains: for to depart from here without seeing Malacca, the Moluccas, and China would seem to me like attending a very splendid dinner and tasting of it

[1] Autograph in the Medici Archive, Bundle CXLV, f. 987.

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nothing but the bread that one eats every day. My desire, therefore, would be, on departing from here, to go to Malacca and spend a year there; from there to the Moluccas, and thence return to China to stay an equal time, and to try to learn something of that land with more foundation than what I see others know from the reports that those who went there have given. From China I would wish to pass to Manila, a port on the island of the Luzones, which between China and the Moluccas is possessed by the Castilians, where a governor comes from New Spain; and because from the said place of Manila a ship goes every year to New Spain, I would wish to pass there to see those other Indies, and having stayed there two years, return to our parts: a course of time in all of seven or eight years; which, speaking according to the ordinary course of life, I should have to live, if Our Lord God does not dispose otherwise, even though I am already 46 years old and of a bodily constitution that would prefer rest to the thought of new hardships. But considering how much delight the seeing of this part has brought me, I am resolved to put this pleasure before every greater comfort; thinking, moreover, that in this pilgrimage I might serve His Highness and Your Most Illustrious Lordship, giving them account of things that may seem worthy of knowing.

It is true that to put this plan of mine into execution, I would need to be a little better furnished with the goods of this world than I am; but having already passed the greater part of this life always in discomfort, I go on reckoning that the same will continue from here on, and that the past will be the rule for the future. What is most necessary, where I come to ask a favor of Your Most Illustrious Lordship, is to be able to make this journey safely and with some convenience, without having to give account to any Authority of where I go or stay. And although things in this state and dominion of the Portuguese are rather loose, without taking very strict account of foreigners who go about, these governors do not fail to look askance at anyone who goes about noting the ways and customs of peoples: for being very far from their lord, they do not like it to be known all that passes in their own places; and yet one gets by.

The contrary is the case where the Castilians rule: for it being forbidden to foreigners to pass to their Indies

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without license, whoever undertakes that voyage without it meets with trouble; for he is either forced, along with everything he carries, to placate those officials, or to lose it by the rigor of the law. His Majesty grants each year to the officials of the Council of the Indies the favor of certain licenses permitting foreigners to go to his West Indies; which are then sold for the small sum of about 100 ducats, more or less, according to the abundance or scarcity of them; but they serve only for passing from Seville to those Indies. From here it has not occurred, that I know of, to request such a license. I know well that His Majesty has desired and greatly desires to discover and facilitate that navigation and trade from one Indies to the other, and to have particular reports thereof: which up to now has not come about; and last year a simple Castilian soldier departed from here for this

purpose, a man of little account, but who knew nothing of maritime affairs. So that if Your Most Illustrious Lordship were pleased to favor me in this, I believe that very easily he would obtain from His Majesty not only a license to make this voyage, but understanding that

would come in his service, he would give me an ample patent so that I might be left alone and allowed to pass in all parts both of these and of the other, western Indies, without anyone asking me any account of what I do, where I go or stay; nay, that by all his officials I should be given aid and favor to this end of seeing and learning, sending me to be given cabin passage on the ships from one place to another, and granting me some of the allowances that are given for the expenses of *mattalotaggio* [ship's mess, i.e., provisions for living aboard], just as they did for the aforementioned Castilian; allowing me to trade freely in every place with two or three companions, not so much to be able to cover the expense, which is great, as because in trade one easily discovers customs; with such greater liberties as may seem fitting to Your Most Illustrious Lordship. Which license, once obtained, would have to be registered at the *Casa de la Contratación* [House of Trade] in Seville, and be sent here in at least three copies.

I believe that it will be easy for Your Most Illustrious Lordship to obtain such a license, if you see fit to attempt it; for should you for whatever reason not think it proper to request it, I shall receive the favor from you as if I had obtained it, certain of your benign disposition, with which you are accustomed to favor all your servants: in the number of whom

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he takes the boldness to count himself, praying as such for increase of state, of life, and of health from Our Lord God.

Sealed, the 10th of February; and I have nothing to add to Your Most Illustrious Lordship for the present. Our Lord, etc.

Of Your Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lordship,

Most humble, etc.

CV. To Baccio Valori, in Florence.

Published.[1]

He sends him the discourse on cinnamon, together with some plants of this shrub, which then sank during the voyage. In it he learnedly examines the question of whether the cinnamon that grows on the island of Ceylon is the same thing as the cinnamomum mentioned by the ancients.

Most illustrious and excellent Sir.

The affairs of the sea are so uncertain that, as the Portuguese would say, no one can be sure of them, and everything is a matter of chance. It displeased Bondelmonti not to be able to embark on a ship that was lost on the way in Galicia: he changed vessel and found himself deceived; he will have come afterward, and paid his respects to Your Lordship, for among his first desires was to greet you, revere you, and obey you.

It seems to me that, one thing reckoned against the other, I am not even in capital, what with the letter from Messer Piero Vettori and his expected and surely mourned death,[2] because so great a public and private good cannot be lost without the deepest feeling. It is true that if I had come here to find a precious pearl, I would return at once; for I value this letter more, and shall treasure it more, as I ought, than any other riches.

[1] Collated with the autograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana. [2] *La sua morte aspettata e pianta certo*. *Aspettata*, because Vettori was 87 years old; *pianta*, because he was "most learned and equally most humane" (Giambullari, *Orig. Fir.*); "who, through the works that are read, so many and so fine, of his, is celebrated throughout the world not only as a most learned man but also as most eloquent, beyond his nobility and so many other most praiseworthy qualities" (Varchi, *Ercol.*); and the "most subtle

> diligence of restoring Greek and Latin books to their full correctness, being esteemed by every man of perfect judgment as a person of the highest integrity and deserving well of the Florentine youth and nobility, schooled by him, one may say, until his death" (Valori, *Term. mez. ril.*).

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It seems to me, my lord, that things are arranging themselves in such a way that in April two years hence I shall think of departing from here; and to satisfy the desire, no less yours than mine, of learning about the ideas of the Chinese, I believe surely that I shall go there. Those Japanese princes [TN: the famous Japanese embassy of 1582–90 to Europe], puffed up perhaps by the[1] many favors received in those parts, have been humbled by Our Lord, because the ship on which they were passing to that of Portugal has not appeared; and although it is believed on good grounds that she is in Mozambique, there is no certainty of it, and it is regarded with suspicion. Those fathers[2] [the Jesuits] have now entered the kingdom of China; but as their entire aim is to make Christians, they do not spend time on what is not to their purpose. And so Your Lordship will find those letters *de rebus Japonicis* [on Japanese affairs] all directed[3] at giving account of these events and nothing more; or if there is anything else, it is directed to this end.

This past year I have been trying to see if I could ascertain what[4] the *cinnamomum* of the ancients was, and I wrote to Your Lordship that this present[5] [year] I would send you what I thought about it. I have written — I know not what[6] I have written — and I have placed in a chest a plant of this *cinnamomum* of mine, which goes to Lisbon to my cousin Carlo Velluti, so that he may send it to Pisa, and from there have it sent to you: and when that happens, and the thing is present, and not before, you will do me the grace together with Signor Neri Neri of examining also the words, set down in a manner very different from what would befit an old Alterato,[7]

a friend of the Silente, the Tenero, and the others, who treat these things differently; but from a man who is in India, I do not know what[8] can be expected other than to excuse him, or to send his affairs packing off to the *Ziba* [TN: an academic nickname, likely humorous]. Of those alphabets I have been unable to ascertain anything, for they are not scripts of these parts.[9] It is

> [1] *Dei*. Printed edition: *pe'* [for the]. [2] *Quei padri*. The Jesuits. [3] *Indiritte*. Printed edition: *dirette*; and likewise *diretto* in the following line. [4] *Che*. Printed edition: *che cosa*. [5] *Presente*. Understand: year. [6] *Non so quello*. Printed edition: *ma non so quello*. [7] *Ad un Alterato vecchio*. That is, to an old member of the Academy of the Alterati, to which also belonged the two named next, the Silente (Bernardo Davanzati) and the Tenero (Giambatista Strozzi). [8] *Che*. Missing in the printed edition. [9] *Che quanto e non sono lettere di queste parti*. Printed edition: *se non che non sono lettere di queste parti*.

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true that some of these Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus] tell me that on the mainland there are found very ancient columns with letters understood by no one. Before I leave I must get to the bottom of this matter, there being moreover some towns in the interior that retain the Greek element[1] *Poli* [city] as part of their name, with the accent on the last syllable. I have much rejoiced at your country estate, for since Your Lordship visits it often, I shall derive much benefit from it on account of the air and the gathering of your friends who will continually be there; and your son will enjoy it greatly, and it will be a means[2] for him to preserve and grow and give Your Lordship that pleasure and contentment which I wish for you from Our Lord.

In Cochin, the 6th of January 1587, *a nativitate*.

Of Your most illustrious Lordship,

Most affectionate servant.

> [1] *Ritengono per la parte del nome greco*. Printed edition: *hanno nella loro denominazione la parte del nome greco*. [2] *Parte*, that is, *intanto*. Printed edition: *a parte*.

DISCOURSE ON CINNAMON.[3]

The historical depiction of anything, with all its features, properties, and qualities, is such that it misleads many who, by going into particulars, add to the truth that one sees, touches, and tastes, what one hears from someone who heard it from others who neither saw it, nor heard it from anyone who saw it, nor cared about anything but[4] telling something new and strange. This, together with the diversity of customs and different use of things proceeding from the variation of the times, has caused much confusion among modern writers disputing whether we have or are without the *cinnamomum* of which

> [3] Apograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana. This copy has rendered me good service for some not inconsiderable variants, while the one upon which the first Florentine editors chanced was, by their own confession, full of alterations and errors: of which if any still remains unemended, it is left to the kind judgment of the gentle reader. The present discourse will moreover always be held dear, which in its smallness compensates in erudition for a longer treatise, and which, despite the necessary corrections recognized by the author himself in Letter CVIII, merited that the celebrated Andrea Cisalpino (*Appendix ad Libros De plantis, et Quaestiones peripateticas*, Rome, ap. Aloys. Zannetum, 1613) should make ample and honorable mention of it. [4] *Che*. Printed edition: *se non*.

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Herodotus, Theophrastus, Dioscorides, Pliny, Galen, and others wrote.

Amato Lusitano[1] believes that all the species of *cinnamomum* described by the ancients can be found in the *cassia* of India [as sold] in Lisbon, as if[2] the Portuguese were to be blamed as negligent for not having discovered in their navigations to the East Indies so rich a thing as *cinnamomum*. And

had Andrea Laguna believed the same, he would not have deemed it a gift when someone gave him a piece of *cinnamomum* said to have been found in the tomb of Maria, sister of Honorius and Arcadius [TN: Roman emperors], discovered during the pontificate of Paul III. He does say, however, that in Venice all the species of *cassia lignea* could be found; and to his opinion our Mattioli inclines, and Fuchs to that of the Portuguese.

There were in India in modern times Garzia de Orta, a Portuguese, and Cristóbal Acosta, an African: the former in his dialogues[3] examines the nature of many aromatics and medicines; and the latter, having collected the ideas of the former, has compiled a book in the Castilian language, entitled *Tratado de las Drogas y Medicinas de las Indias Orientales*; following in all things, as he says, the determinations of the other. Both wrote at length on the nature of *cinnamomum*. The conclusion, many times repeated by both and by neither of them proved, is that the fine cinnamon that is brought from the island of Ceylon is the true *cinnamomum* described by the ancients; and that the cinnamon of Malabar and of Java, which the Portuguese call *de mattos*, meaning wild, is the *cassia lignea* of the same ancients, and that the one and the other are one and the same species differing between themselves only by the more and less;[4] and that the diversity of names began in Persia, where, as the Chinese brought them by the naviga-

[1] *Amato Lusitano*. Under this name is known João Rodrigo Amato, a Portuguese physician of Jewish origin, born in Castelo Branco in 1511, and author of the *Exegemata in priores duos Dioscoridis de materia medica libros* (Antwerp, 1536). Mattioli in his commentary on Dioscorides does not spare the lies and fables of this madman (I meant to say Amato) Lusitano, calling him time and again senseless and fit for chains. [2] *Come*. Printed edition: *quasi* [as if]. [3] *Ne' suoi dialoghi*. They were printed in Goa in 1563 with this title: *Colóquios dos simples e drogas da India*; and reprinted in Italian by Annibale Briganti, Venice, 1576. Of the cited work of Cristóbal (Cristoforo) d'Acosta there is also a translation by Guilandini, published in Venice in 1585. [4] *Per lo più e meno*.

Printed edition: *poco più o meno* [more or less].

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tion of Hormuz, the fine cinnamon was called *Darchini*, which means wood of the Chinese; and the other, a lower merchandise of sailors and of the poor, both then and now, retained the Malay common name *Caismanis*, which means sweet wood — having passed from Hormuz to Syria and to Egypt, the better, from *Archini*, came to be called *cinnamomum*, and the other, *cassia lignea*, from *Caismanis*. And one must marvel at this Acosta, who, while showing how both things passed from here to the Arabs and to the Greeks, then says that the same people did not know these simples.

The foundations of these two ought by rights to have resolved this difficulty and found the truth; but their opinion cannot be called well founded, even though it is much aided by what Galen says — that there was a certain species of *cinnamomum*, the most imperfect, which was like the *cassia lignea* of the best kind: whence one may argue that between *cinnamomum* and *cassia* in their time there was no other difference than of the better and the worse. Indeed, Galen says that *cassia* was transmuted into *cinnamomum*, and that the nature of the latter was universally similar to that of the best *cassia*. Therefore, if today's cinnamon, including the more imperfect, is the *cassia lignea* of the ancients (of which there seems no doubt), it will be true to say[1] that the finest cinnamon of these times is similar in nature to *cinnamomum*.

But the identifying marks with which the same ancient writers depicted it seem to persuade us otherwise; of which the principal foundation (to come to the truth of what is sought) is the reporting of that part in which[2] they describe those qualities that they saw, touched, and tasted — in which the false reports of others had no room to deceive them.

Dioscorides makes several species of *cinnamomum*, and says it is named from the places where it grows, and the best is believed to be that which, by its resemblance to the Mosylite *cassia*, was called *Mosyliticum*. Fresh, it is black in color, tending from the wine-like to the ashen, smooth, with thin branches, girt with frequent nodes, and most fragrant. An indication[3] of the best will be given by the quality of its pleasing scent;

> [1] *Dire*. Printed edition: *il dire* [the saying]. [2] *È il raccontare quella parte nella quale*, etc. The ms. would read: *si dee raccontare quella parte che*, etc. [3] *Darà*. Printed edition: *darei* [I would give].

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and especially in that which was most in use and of a scent close to rue and cardamom: that which was approved[1] was pungent and biting to the taste with a certain salty warmth; and that there was a third kind similar to the Mosyliticum, black, most fragrant, dense in its shoots, and with few knots. Pliny, after recounting the stories of the ancients at his pleasure, and after saying[2] that the fleet of Alexander smelled its scent while coasting along Arabia, adds: all lies — for *cinnamomum* or *cinnamon* grows in Ethiopia, which is joined to Troglodytice; which is also the opinion of Ptolemy, who calls it *Troglodytica cinnamifera*. But Pliny, pursuing his subject, after laboring to depict the plant for us, adds that the best part of the twigs was in the thinnest portion for the length of a palm, and after this, the next part, but shorter, and so on in order; the worst of all being that near the roots, for there being little bark there, in which lay the height of its excellence, and therefore the tips being more valued, where there is more bark: but the wood was disliked for the sharpness of oregano, and was called *lignum cinnamomum* [cinnamon wood]. He discusses the price, and adds that some made two kinds of *cinnamomum*, the white and the black; and formerly the white was valued, but then on the contrary the black was valued, and the variegated preferred to the white.

And treating of *cassia*, he said[3] that it was a bush that grew near the fields of *cinnamomum*, but in the mountains, with thicker shoots and a rind, rather than a bark, that was thinner: which, contrary to *cinnamomum*, it was worthwhile to hollow out and make lighter. Galen presents it to us with these marks: "The best, then, must be most fragrant, and more than anything else must breathe forth an inexplicable but most delicate scent; it must likewise be very hot and biting to the taste, but not so much that, when chewed, it offends the palate; and it must have a color as if milk were mixed with some black color and with a little blue together"; and he says a little further on that every *cinnamomum* grows from a root in the manner of a small shrub, and that some have six, and some seven shoots, or a few more, but not all of the same length, although the longest

> [1] *Approvasi*. Printed edition: *accorciarsi* [to shorten]. [2] *Dopo aver detto*. The ms. has *dipoi*, and nothing more. [3] *Diceva*. Printed edition: *Dice* [Says].

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of all does not exceed the length of half a Roman foot.[1] This is what the ancients said of *cinnamomum*; and it seems that from their thinking one may establish that *cinnamomum* grew in Troglodytice: for even though Dioscorides has it growing in Arabia, since he says some came from the place called Mosylite, he comes in a certain way to confess that it also grew in Troglodytice. Whence it is plainly gathered[2] that the cinnamon of Ceylon cannot be the same thing as *cinnamomum*, since the places where the one and the other grow are so far apart.

Cristóbal d'Acosta[3] thought that this name Mosylite served to prove his opinion, dividing it, as I reckon, into two parts, as if it meant to say *Seilão* and *Mo*, that is, mountainous: whence he advises apothecaries that in the compositions of medicines that require *cinnamomum*, they should put cinnamon of Ceylon, which is a mountainous island — perhaps not

remembering that Pliny, in the 29th chapter of his sixth book, places the port of Mosylite on the coast of Ethiopia, which comes forth from the gate of the Red Sea, with these words: “Beyond, the Abalite gulf, the island of Diodorus and other deserted ones;[4] and inland, also deserted, the town of Gaza and the promontory and port of Mosylite, whence *cinnamomum* is brought”; which promontory and port are also placed by Ptolemy in the same location, and called by him Monsylon. Nor ought we[5] to suppose that, just as they reported other falsehoods about *cinnamomum*, it was a lie that it was brought from there: for all the other islands[6] were already discovered; the Red Sea, navigated by the Romans in those times, is well described by Pliny; not only that, but the navigation from that coast all the way to the island of Taprobana.

Much greater force has the argument that of itself bursts forth against their opinion, from the identifying marks that the ancient writers attributed to *cinnamomum*. For we cannot suppose that such men were mistaken in saying that among *cinnamomum* there was

[1] Galen, *Opera*, Quinta Classis, p. 105. Venice, 1556. [2] *Si coglie*, that is, *si comprende* [is understood]. Printed edition: *Si raccoglie*. [3] *Il Cristoforo d’Acosta*. In the printed edition the article *Il* is omitted, perhaps because of that rule of grammarians that surnames should go without the article when preceded by the given name. [4] *Ed altre diserte*. The manuscript reads *tutto diserte*. Latin: *et aliae desertae*. [5] *Da noi*. Missing in the ms. [6] *Isole*. Printed edition: *favole* [fables].

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white, black, and variegated, since they had no need of others’ reports in what they saw and tasted for themselves. They make, then, various species of *cinnamomum*; and while Dioscorides praises the black, Galen approves the variegated, which is the color that results from white and black mixed with blue. But if today someone were to say that black cinnamon is better

than the red, or indeed[1] the variegated and the white, as a thing beyond doubt, no account whatsoever[2] would be taken of it; for cinnamon of such colors has already lost its perfection. Cristóbal d'Acosta was unable to extricate himself from this difficulty, which he himself saw; and without citing authors or explaining it, he dispatches it with such a warning, that should we encounter *cinnamomum* or cinnamon of these colors, we must understand that it is already spoiled, or on its way to decay: so far was his conclusion from finding the true *cinnamomum* by the marks of the ancients — that which to him was a sign of decay being what was then a sign of perfection and specific distinction.

But the same ancient writers speak of this simple as a wood having all its parts, and not as a mere bark, such as cinnamon is. Which Mattioli noted well, writing against their opinion upon the chapter on *cinnamomum* of Dioscorides, who speaks of it in such a manner, assigning it branches, knots, and other parts, that[3] we must deem it a wood. And although Pliny throughout the entire chapter in which he examines this subject understands it as a wood, he clearly says so where, discussing the marks of *cassia*, even though he believed it was hollowed out in that fabulous manner, he says that it was worth the trouble to hollow it out, contrary to what was done with *cinnamomum*. Whence one gathers that by the name *cinnamomum* was not understood a bark, but a shoot with its wood, bark, branches, and every other part. And it is from this manifest that the cinnamon of Ceylon is not the same thing as *cinnamomum*; nor can one, in my opinion, lay down a conclusion such that every part corresponds to what the ancients wrote of *cinnamomum*, and[4] removes all the difficulties that might be raised against it: not because I believe that

[1] *Pure*. Printed edition: *più* [more]. [2] *Nessuno*. Printed edition: *alcuno*. [3] *Che*. Printed edition: *per le quali* [by which]. [4] Here the printed edition uselessly repeats the *che*.

we lack this simple, but because one sees plainly that the ancients were ill-informed about this and many other things; as about the place where they said it grew — which gave *cinnamomum* the name of *Mosyliticum* — a thing entirely untrue, for from this land…[1] there comes much ivory, honey, butter, millet, and other things necessary for sustenance; but spices and aromatics of no sort. Nor can what Pliny recounts be held true or probable — that the forests of *cinnamomum* were destroyed by that fire,[2] and especially by the heat borne by the southern winds to those parts and to these of India; for since they come from over the great southern ocean, they bring with them much tempest of thunder, lightning, and rain: whereas if that burning had been attributed to the winds that come from the direction of Egypt, and for a long stretch over upper Ethiopia, we might more easily have inclined to that opinion. But if that fire was an accidental event, why did the earth not return to produce those plants which it spontaneously produced before, as we read happens in coppice woods, or in those that burn by some accident? If that fire was an ordinary thing caused by winds that always blow in their season, how was the *cinnamomum* of those times harvested?

Nor should one believe that the *cinnamomum* plant could not have been kept alive, just as some say the balsam plant could not be maintained — for the comparison does not hold even were it true that balsam is no longer found today; since many believe it is still found, there being brought from Constantinople a certain liquor that comes from the treasury of the Grand Turk as balsam, with many of the qualities attributed to it by those who anciently examined its nature. And from an Arab there was brought here a small flask of a liquor that he, in his language, likewise called balsam; which spread upon water without leaving any spot; and it curdled milk,[3]

[1] The missing word, according to the ms., is *Cabescìa* [TN: i.e., Abyssinia/Ethiopia]. [2] *Per quell'incendio fatto*. "For Pliny writes in the 19th chapter of the 12th book that many forests of *cinnamomum* were once burned, with these words: 'The price of *cinnamomum* was formerly a thousand denarii, but then increased by half, since (as they say) the forests were burned by the rage of the barbarians.'" Mattioli, *Com. Diosc.*, I, 13. [3] *Rappigliava il latte*. Printed edition: *rappigliato in latte* [curdled in milk].

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but floating upon it formed little bubbles, as oil does upon water. Spread on woolen cloths, having been poured over them and then washed, they did not come entirely clean. And this liquor that this fellow brought from Mecca, I believe for certain was balsam, but with some admixture. But granted that this plant is not known and is not found, it does not follow that it is extinct; and even if this one were, not therefore that of *cinnamomum*.

Nor was the argument good to conclude that *cinnamomum* grew in Troglodytice because it left the aforesaid Mosylite and was called by that name; because the cape too, which, coming out from the Red Sea side, on the Ethiopian side juts out, and which today is called Cape Guardafui, was anciently called *Aromatum Promontorium* [Cape of Spices], not because spices grew there, but because vessels leaving these parts of India and heading for Arabia and Egypt went to sight that cape, and in the places named above made their first port of call; whence the ancients believed that all the spices and aromatics that grow in the parts of India grew in Arabia; and likewise where incense and myrrh *ensecofora* [TN: likely *incense-bearing*] and aloe grow. But in the books of our merchants one will also find written "kermes of Spain," although it grows in the West Indies; but since it was warehoused in the city of Seville,[1] from where it was distributed to every other part, it came to be called kermes of Spain. Likewise, good turpentine is called Venetian, although there is nothing[2] in

Venice but a channel of salt water, where no turpentine grows. And the ginger that goes from these parts by way of Alexandria to Italy is called *d'Abuli*, which means from Dabhol, a port of call on this coast held by the Moors; although ginger goes to Mecca from Calicut, from Cannanore, from Barcelore, and from Baticalà, and from the same port of Dabhol, from which, whatever the reason, it all took its name. So that what deceived the ancients, not only about *cinnamomum* but about *lycium* and many other things for which they assigned as homeland the place where they were warehoused and from which they were all carried, since the reasoning is the same, goes on deceiving the moderns too. Not only, then, the land that produces, but

> [1] *Sibilla*. Printed edition: *Siviglia* [Seville]. [2] *Non avendo*. Printed edition: *sebbene non è* [although there is not].

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the place where something is greatly traded gives it its name: from which one cannot, in truth, argue about its origins; and in doing so, one remains deceived, as I believe happened to the ancients not only in this particular, but in the size of the plant as well: in which I see there is much disagreement among them. And were there no error in that text, one might wish for the usual clarity in Galen, who writes that the longest shoot of *cinnamomum* was half a Roman foot. And in another place he says that a plant had been brought to Rome, all whole, in a vessel the size of four cubits; and he would perhaps mean what Pliny said, that the pieces made of the shoots of *cinnamomum* were about half a foot in size, more or less. But since the extreme tips of the shoots were the most prized, and as these were both the thinnest and the shortest, the greater part of those brought to Rome would have been of these, and taken to be the size of the whole plant; on account of which,[1] as of a marvelous thing, Galen made mention of that

plant of four cubits.

Considering many times (as the long time spent on the very long voyage from Lisbon to India gives ample opportunity to do) what the ancients say about this simple, and the marks by which they particularize it — because at every point one could see and attest that in effect they did not make it different, as to its substance, from *cassia lignea*, except by the mark of better and worse. And seeing likewise that it is held to be true that today's cinnamon, either all of it or the worse sort, is the *cassia lignea* of the ancients; and noting further that the same ancients speak of *cinnamomum* as a wood, indeed, but not inasmuch as[2] they declare that the bark was valued, and not the wood, to which they give its own name different from *cinnamomum*, calling it *lignum cinnamomum*, declared entirely useless in almost everything, as was learnedly noted by Mathias de Lobel; I always believed that the opinion of the two, Orta[3] and Acosta, recited above, lacked more in explication than in truth.

> [1] *Per donde*. Printed edition: *donde*. [2] *Non per quanto*. See the Glossary, where there are other examples. Printed edition: *non pertanto* [nevertheless]. [3] *Aorta*. That is, the above-mentioned Garzia d'Orta, or da Orta. *Garcias ab Horto*, or *de la Huerta* [of the garden].

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And certainly, to say that the cinnamon of Ceylon is *cinnamomum*, and then, being unable to explain how it comes about that the black and the variegated are the best — as the ancients said of *cinnamomum* — to say that it is either spoiled or on its way to spoiling, is as much as to call such men insensate, or else to show the weakness of one's own opinion.

Having come to India, and having seen many times in the land of Malabar, of Canara, and in this of Goa the cinnamon plant that they call *de mattos* [wild], the features and qualities of the whole shrub both growing green

above the ground and cut and dried; and seeing white, black, and variegated shoots, I judged that the *cinnamomum* could not be anything other than[1] the very same plant from which on the island of Ceylon they strip the bark for the cinnamon — cut from its stump with all its parts and brought to our country. And having for two continuous years given care and money to persons who went to that island, to bring me cinnamon plants from that land in order to confirm my opinion, the second time there were brought to me two great bundles of trees or shrubs of the said plant, with all their branches, leaves, bark, and other parts, as nature made them: at the sight of which I was confirmed that the *cinnamomum* of the ancients was nothing other than the stalk of the cinnamon plant split from its stump, just as nature created it, all the true marks that the ancients attributed to it fitting it; being in the first place of a coppice nature, so that the bark is stripped by cutting the stalks every three years.

[1] *Al tutto*. Printed edition: *altro* [other].

The colors with which the ancients depicted it are all to be seen there, and particularly there is this kind specified by Galen, as if it were a black with milk poured over it and mixed with blue: a distinction so singular and particular that, even if there were no other argument, this alone would be sufficient to resolve anyone to this opinion. The other species recounted by Pliny, the white and the variegated, are likewise to be seen there, but much more so that which Dioscorides said was much esteemed, which tended from the wine-like to the ashen: which mark, inasmuch as it applies to the plain cinnamon bark (an argument to prove the opinion of the moderns), is perceived in the wood itself and in the rind

[1] *Al tutto*. Printed edition: *altro* [other].

in such a manner that on this point no room for doubt remains. What Dioscorides and Galen said of the most delicate scent that *cinnamomum* breathed forth might make one doubtful of this opinion: for things that emit a scent, such as musk and civet, the pineapple and the citron, as soon as one enters where they are, immediately make themselves felt; which does not happen with the cinnamon plant, which gives off no scent either dry or green: which[1] creates difficulty no less for the said opinion than for this one; for if one enters a room that is full of the finest cinnamon, one does not smell it. But a knife or other instrument, or even the hand itself, draws one out of this difficulty, not only by breaking one of the shoots, but merely by warming them, and rubbing one piece against another; by which motion there comes forth that pleasing scent of which the above-named writers speak. Nor is it necessary to place fragrant things in one's presence without otherwise altering them in order to smell them; for[2] of ambergris we see that without being dissolved it has no scent that gives pleasure.

But the flavor of Ceylon cinnamon by itself could have sufficed to make one recognize that it was either the finest *cinnamomum*, or one of the better species; for as its warmth goes about scorching the palate as pepper would, a sweetness so gentle reveals itself as its companion, that the taste cannot resolve itself whether the offense it receives from the heat is greater, or the delight afforded by the sweetness; and, as if greatly in doubt about this, one goes back many times to try the experiment with little pieces: a particular mark attributed by Galen to *cinnamomum*, and one which makes the cinnamon of Ceylon different from the wild cinnamon [*de mattos*] that grows in Malabar. This latter, carrying with it much heat, lacks the tempering of that sweetness in such a manner that the mouth is left burned and discontented; and although by touch and by sight alone one recognizes both, the proper difference lies in the flavor — one seeing at the lower parts of these plants the small dry branches, that is, without substance of wood;

which is what Pliny would mean to say, since all the wood would have appeared in Italy dry, as we see at the foot of trees in dense forests

> [1] *Che*. Printed edition: *Il che* [Which]. [2] *Ma*. Printed edition: [blank].

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that for want of sun the lower branches remain hollow and without substance. The stem between node and node is smooth, and near the base the bark is so thin that the ancients would rightly have thought little of that part, in which the outer rind cannot be well distinguished from the bark; and the wood, when chewed and held in the mouth, at last gives off some flavor of the bark, though slight: so that I am persuaded that it was and would be more to be despised for being insipid, than because it had the sharpness of oregano. Wherefore I cannot but marvel — since even then it was held in no account — at how it was carried to Europe, given the custom of hollowing out the *cassia*; nor can one suppose that this proceeded from anything other than some flavor of the bark being detected in it; but it would later come to be despised through the abundance of this spice. But since this cinnamon was called in Persia *Darchini*, which means, as they say, wood of the Chinese, that custom lasted as long as the trade of those peoples lasted; and by the Arabs, who succeeded them in the trade, people of the finest understanding, the custom of hollowing it out would have been refined on the example of the other.

One may think it a marvel that, if *cinnamomum* grew on the island of Taprobana, which is the island of Ceylon, the ambassadors of a king of that island who went to Rome in the time of Claudius, recounting the marvels of their land, made no mention whatsoever of *cinnamomum*, since it was so highly prized in our parts. It is true that if those Negroes had been shrewd men, they ought to have told of *cinnamomum*, and kept silent about the fact that from their land the Great Bear could not be seen, and, what is worse,

the Pleiades,[1] which continually revolve above their heads, and that from there the Sericani [TN: the Chinese/silk-people] could be seen. But so it is, that those peoples, then[2] innocent, not accustomed to seeing strange faces nor to traveling in foreign lands — navigation being prohibited by the law of those Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus] — will not have troubled[3] to know, nor to be cunning, and will have answered the questions put to them with whatever came to their mouths, it being displeasing

> [1] *Le Gallinelle*. The Pleiades, or Hyades. [2] *Allora*. In the printed edition it comes after *vedere* [to see]. [3] *Non avranno curato*. The ms. instead has *non arebbono curato* [would not have troubled]; and likewise puts in the conditional all the future perfects that follow: *avranno risposto* [will have answered] (for *risponderebbero* [would answer]); *vi sarà stato* [there will have been] (for *avrebbe* [would have]); *se l'avranno taciuto* [will have kept silent about it] (for *se 'l tacerebbono* [would keep silent]).

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to anyone, however simple, to loosen his tongue to say "I know not" when the question was about something he did not know. But since in those times it was believed that *cinnamomum* grew in Troglodytice or in Arabia, whence it was brought to our parts, there will have been no one who asked them about this particular, and they will have kept silent about it. If one of us were brought to a place where garlic neither grew nor was known to grow in our countries — though it grows everywhere — he would not list this among the principal gifts of our land, abundance everywhere creating contempt; just as on that island of Ceylon a *bar* of the finest cinnamon, which is 360 pounds[1] of 16 ounces, is sold for six or seven *parafini*[2] of 6 *reales* each; and this now that the Portuguese are in continuous war with the *Ragui*[3] [TN: the *Rajah*, king of Ceylon], whereas otherwise in time of peace it cost only what was spent to have it cut: wherefore[4] it is no wonder that, as a thing of little value, those Negroes made no mention of it.

The tree of the finest cinnamon being therefore the true *cinnamomum*, it grows on the island of Ceylon, which is the ancient Taprobana, and is today called by all the Indians *Cingal* [TN: Sinhala]; and it grows in every part of the island, but particularly in the low-lying places that face the sea. And some say that in sailing along that island, one can smell it: a thing said by Pliny, who reports that the fleet of Alexander the Great, coasting along Arabia, smelled the scent of *cinnamomum*; and, as was said above, we see that cinnamon, neither dry nor green, without being disturbed has no scent. But[5] to those who come from a long sea voyage, as they approach any part of this land of India, there presents itself a most sweet indistinct scent, which can be determined to be neither of sea nor of land, except that the sense is greatly satisfied by it, as if it were a compound of the scent given off by the plants of that coast, which are in flower most of the time; and of many the flowers are most fragrant, such as the

> [1] *Che sono 360 libbre*. Francesco Carletti, in his *Viaggi*, makes the *bar* a weight of 400 pounds. [2] *Parafini*. So also the ms. Perhaps *xarafini* or *serafini* [seraphins], noted elsewhere. [3] *Ragui*. Printed edition: *Ragni*. [4] *Per donde*. Printed edition: *donde*. [5] *Ma*. Printed edition: *bensì* [rather].

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wild *Manga* [mango] and the *Cagiù* [cashew]: so much so that when one sails close to shore and land breezes blow, one cannot have enough of the most delicate scent they carry with them, which one would perhaps suppose to be that of the cinnamon trees proper; which are a shrub not unlike in form a strawberry tree, or a cluster of young hazel bushes. Among its roots, since a single stump has many, a single one — the thickest — goes down into the earth; and this then has other, thinner ones. From a single stump there spring six or seven shoots, four braccia tall, which then have the proper thickness for stripping the cinnamon bark from them. The small branches that are near the base, as happens to trees that stand in dense

forests, dry out. The leaves in form are similar to those of the laurel, bordered by a smooth line, with a rib down the middle lengthwise, and two others which, joining with this at the tip and at the stalk, form an oval shape: from these move crosswise certain threads between rib and rib, as if they were a spider's web. The cinnamon shoots have a certain very thin little rind of various colors, according to the particular constitution of the plant, its position, the time, and the part — for all these things contribute to making the color variegated. For at the base, when[1] the plant is thick, the said rind is white, at the top black, in the middle variegated; so that on one and the same stalk all those differences of color are often seen, from which the ancients took occasion to make different species of *cinnamomum*; and on many stalks one sees that color of which Galen spoke, as if milk were poured upon black. Other stalks are of the wine-like color tending to the ashen, as Dioscorides said; but under this rind is the bark that is stripped for cinnamon, which in the Ceylon variety is thinner than in that of Malabar; and under this bark is the wood, the material of which is light and fibrous, and in the middle it has the pith of a reddish color, like that of the laurel, but not so large. It is a wood of insipid flavor, except that after having chewed it much, there is at last revealed a little of the heat of cinnamon, but so weak that, unless one pays close attention, it is not discerned. Between the stalk of the leaves and the stem from which they grow, there comes forth

[1] *Come*. Printed edition: *comecché* [although].

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a white, round, thin thread, which opens at the top into small little branches or fingers; and at the summit of each of these is a small bud, which when closed resembles the young fruit of the olive, both in shape and in color: it opens into six petals, which at the base unite and form a calyx; and the

substance of the flower, which consists of thin filaments with broad, round tips, is attached at the bottom. These flowers are of so delicate a constitution that no sooner are they open than they are killed by the sun. The scent is not pleasing, but rather heavy on the head and little agreeable: the taste is astringent; and the fruit that grows from them is a bud of no great size, not unlike in form a bud of the citron or lemon flower, which sits in a cup like acorns: which bud, green at first, goes on swelling and turning purple, and as it ripens tends toward black; when in its perfection, it is like an acorn. This bud is a shell, or rather rind, within which the seed of the plant is enclosed — small grains, like those of the fig, yellow in color, without scent, and of the same flavor as cinnamon, but sweeter. Birds feed on this fruit, and wild pigeons avidly; whence they become so stupefied that, sitting on the branches asleep, their head falls now to one side and now to the other, like a drunkard who reels.

The flavor of the bark need not be described again, since one has, especially, cinnamon between one's teeth all day long. The bark of the roots is much more pungent than that of the stem, and when chewed it strikes the brain almost like lavender oil, or like camphor. The leaves are most pleasing to the taste, and although they do not burn, when chewed, as cinnamon does, they are not much inferior to it; but the tender and new ones, far from having this gentle flavor, are unpleasantly astringent, and make the mouth slippery, as if one held in one's mouth the seeds of quinces.

From the cinnamon, distilled while still green, its most precious water is extracted; but no less good is that which Mattioli teaches how to make. The shrub or tree of the mainland cinnamon, which in comparison to that of Ceylon is called wild, grows throughout Malabar and in Canara, and in the Konkan up to the latitude of Goa; but these plants, in comparison to those of Ceylon, seem

truly wild, being knotty, forked, and with many branches. The cinnamon stripped from the plants of Malabar does not yield much to that of Ceylon, except insofar as the bark is more woody and more fibrous, of more burning heat, and scorches the palate with less comfort. In that gathered in Canara, much difference is already discernible; and that of the Konkan is scarcely recognizable by flavor: and so none[1] of this mainland cinnamon has any market, save that of Cochin. The other marks are common to all the plants, in both the one and the other places; and the leaves, which when burned do not crackle, can settle the doubt of those who might incline to make the cinnamon tree and the laurel one and the same thing.

CVI. To Maria Sassetti née Bartoli, in Florence.

Published.

He responds facetiously to her persistent urging that he return, and speaks to her about other matters of the household and the children.

Most honored and dearest Sister.

I do not know how you manage to go ordering these letters of yours in the way you do, pulling one thing after another, so that they seem born and placed together, like fruits that grow in pairs. It is a fine thing, what you say to me — that I did not steal away to India thinking I would not hear the little tales of the family's marriages; for certainly no one ever said such a thing. Yet up to now I have heard nothing that has given me very great disturbance; and even if I did hear such things, I immediately reckon that they bring more annoyance to the writer than to me. All your letters and those of Madonna Nera contain little other than this blessed return of mine. I truly do not know what you would have me do there, for you will have heard from Giovanni Buondelmonti that I have become a whimsical man and of little conversation, accustomed to dealing with slaves; so that I would give the family little satisfaction. Yet you spur me on so much that I am compelled to please you: but it is not to be today, nor tomorrow, nor this week. Wait for me,

[1] *Nessuna*. Printed edition: *nessuno*.

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for I shall return, and soon: if only it were with some good prospects! You complain that the farm buildings have fallen to ruin: I wonder whether by

chance one fell on the head of Biagiotta, and did her some harm — the fault would be yours, or rather hers, for she should have let herself be shored up. These are ordinary things, as you know, and anyone who lives on rents must reckon that the ox dies and the sheep too, or the house collapses, or the hail comes; and to plan on saving from one's rents works out only for those who have other means to spend from.

I do not know what those few coins in the Salviati bank have been up to: I should wish that they had gone on growing for our Madonna Margherita, about whom you say you wrote to me last year of a certain plan of yours; but your letter went down with a ship that was lost, so that, as you say, I did not read it; but it was not because of the bad handwriting, as you say it was. And as for Margherita, she must already, as Madonna Nera said of Caterina, be helping Mama sew, and with her good fortune she would go off to her own house. I have nothing to say to you on this point, except that you should seek two things: that is, to deal with respectable people, and people who are manageable and plain; and who, if they are not Strozzi or Salviati, at least have the standing of reputable persons, and have something of their own, and also do something; for otherwise one cannot live.

And as for Roberto, the custom of those who raise boys in the counting-house is to maintain them with little, because one always makes that reckoning: "He came to us knowing nothing; we have done and said everything." And his case does not depend on the salary of one year or two, but on making himself a thorough master of business, and above all of bookkeeping; for once he knows that, he will not lack employment, and he will be sought after, and will have no trouble: and to come to understand it well, let him spend a couple of years at it, even if he gets nothing else out of it, for that will be the greatest profit he can make. Tell him so on my behalf; and for the rest, since I will not write to him, as I have no time, you

may tell him that I was very glad to hear from you that he is a good boy, and that the more he grows, the more he must show judgment and understanding; and that he should leave off certain whimsical ways of quarreling at home and talking back to you, which I know he has: because from this comes my being written to from those parts a thousand tales about

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his doings that are not befitting a well-born young man such as he is. Girolamo too has written me his letter, which I was glad to see: give him affection and raise him well.

For the news you give me of relatives and friends I thank you. It is well that each one should be settling down and finding his way of living. As for Francesco, since his children are growing, as you say, if there is a way to bring them forward, as is proper, that will be good. Nevertheless, God made them, and He will not abandon them. Let them be well raised, for that is what matters most of all.

I am pleased that Suor Maria Benigna went about enjoying herself in those country places. Madonna Nera writes me that she was also in the Val di Bisenzio: I wonder whether she came out of it even — for having then to shut herself up again is a hardship: yet, as they say, whoever enjoys once does not always suffer. When you write to her, commend me to her warmly, and likewise to our other cousins and relatives; which is all I have to say to you for the present week.

I commend myself to you, and to God.

In Cochin, the 6th of January 1587.

Most affectionate brother.

CVI bis. Letter of Giambatista Vecchietti[1] to Bernardo Vecchietti, in Florence.

He recounts the upheavals in Persia, and how he, having escaped amid hardships and dangers, arrived — ill and without a penny, but with many good books — in Hormuz, intending thence to go to Goa to stay with Sassetti.

On the eighth of September all the people left Tabriz, hearing that the Turkish army was coming; and the king and the prince with the army remained in the city, with the intention, if the Turks were not in great numbers, of going out to meet them in battle; but otherwise, to retreat. And so it was understood they did: for no more than eight days later, they withdrew to the country of Shervan [TN: Shirvan, in present-day Azerbaijan], which borders on the Georgians, halting at the principal city, called Glenge. The Turks entered the empty city, and without any resistance became its masters; and in the month of December, in the said city of Glenge, the prince was murdered. The authors of his death were some of his principal barons, who had previously rebelled against him, and whom he had previously defeated in battle near Qazvin [*Casbino*]; and then, having pardoned them, had received them back into grace and kept them in his company. They, one night when the said prince was drunk, induced a barber to kill him; nor were other notables lacking who were party to this plot along with them, and afterward they put in his place the prince called Abu Taleb, aged about 15 years.

Prince Abbas [TN: the future Shah Abbas the Great], who was in Khorasan [*Corasan*], being older and not having been willing to come when called by them, three of these principal Persians rose up, and each of them occupied a

principal city — namely Kashan [*Gasciano*], Yazd [*Tesd*], and Shiraz [*Sciras*] — killing or driving out the former governors, not however under the pretense of giving it to the Turk, but from their own greed to command; professing and saying they held and governed it for the same king, but in effect obeying no one, and doing what suits them, there being no one in these times who can prevent it: so that today this kingdom is in the greatest disorder, being as much harassed by internal discord as by foreigners; and the old king is incapable

[1] The name alone of the Florentine gentleman, a native of Cosenza, and (as Salvino Salvini calls him) a great traveler, man of letters, and most accomplished master of the Oriental languages, would suffice to win favor for the publication of this letter, which is found in the Magliabechiana Library, Cod. 209, Class XXXVII; all the more since it also speaks of our Sassetti. Girolamo Vecchietti, in his letter on the Life of his brother Giambatista, published by D. Iacopo Morelli in the *Codici Mss. volgari della libreria Naniana* (Venice, 1786), says that "he went on to Hormuz. He was put under the governor's care, and put aboard the *fuste*, arrived at Goa, and went to lodge with Sassetti, to whom afterward in Florence, having heard of his death, mindful of his friend, he delivered the funeral oration." The *Relazione della Persia* of G. B. Vecchietti to His Imperial Majesty is inserted in the cited work of Morelli, who, on p. 106, informs us: "Vecchietti gives a well-informed account of his mission, in 1586, to Persia, of the acts of war between that king and the Grand Turk (of which he had full knowledge), of the constitution and forces of Persia; and finally, discussing the fortress of Hormuz, he observes what seemed to him imperfect in it with respect to military practice; and sets forth many of his observations on the way to make it stronger. The *Relazione* was composed in the year 1588, and has never been printed."

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on account of his blindness, and the new prince on account of his youth. The king, by certain reports, after the death of the prince, is known to have transferred himself to Qazvin, intending to pass to Isfahan [*Spaan*], which is ten days' journey closer to here. It was understood that the Turks

designed to pass by way of Hamadan from Baghdad and from Tabriz: it was also feared they might pass toward Qazvin; but no further development had occurred. It is understood nonetheless that Prince Abbas, aged about 18, who having previously rebelled against his elder brother had warred with him in Khorasan and held that kingdom for his own, is assembling a very great army, intending to go and fight for Tabriz: to which I do not know how much credence may be given.

So that, having left the state and Persia, I — amid hardships, dangers, and expenses, as you may imagine — after departing Tabriz on the 8th of September, finally arrived at Hormuz, ill (by the grace of the Lord) on the 29th of June, but without a penny. I thank God, however, that I find myself in a land of Christians; and although I know no one here, I have found here a merchant who is a friend of Signor Filippo Sassetti, who has offered himself to me. I do not yet know how far this offer extends: yet I believe he will not let me lack the means to get to Goa, where the said Sassetti is. From here the fleets for Goa do not depart until September. It is true that there are here some *fuste* [light galleys] that are expected to depart much sooner for said island [TN: i.e., Goa]. So, being with them, I shall try to embark and get myself to Goa to pass to Portugal; which may God be pleased to bring me to safely, there being no other safe road to travel than this one, having been observed throughout the land of the Turk, and seen by so many people, that wherever I might turn up, I am certain I would be recognized. And of what follows I shall give notice.

Of all these particulars you will inform the Most Illustrious Cardinal, and in Florence the Most Serene Lord Duke; to whom with every reverence I kiss the hand.

From Hormuz, the 2nd of July 1587.

(*Up to here in cipher,*[1] *and what follows in the ordinary way.*)

> [1] *In cifra*. Bernardo Vecchietti, in a letter of 14 April 1588 (Medici Archive, Strozzi Papers, Bundle CXXXVIII, f. 277), gave the following report to Cavaliere Sergardi, secretary: "I shall tell you that I have a rather long letter from Messer Batista Vecchietti in his own hand, dated in Tabriz, which I am deciphering; and I shall send you a copy, it treating of certain matters of Persia. The letter is of the 6th of July; and within two days he was to embark to go to Goa to find

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My most esteemed Lord. I find myself, by the grace of the Lord, arrived safely at Hormuz, with a reasonable quantity of books;[1] and if I am not mistaken, very rare and fine ones; which may God be pleased to let me bring to safety. May Your Lordship give news of this to Signor Cipriano, forwarding this letter to him. I then have, on account, to speak of[2] a cloud of poets, and I understand them reasonably well. Let Your Lordship give news of this to Signor Strozzi and to other poet friends, for at my return, God willing, we shall poetize so much that we shall be exhausted; and when the local ones are tired, we shall take up the foreign ones, *et e converso* [and vice versa].

I remind Your Lordship to procure for me, but with a good stipend, the lectureship that I already asked for as far back as Cairo, for which I feel myself quite well qualified:

> *Perché di provvidenza è ben ch'io m'armi, Acciò se 'l loco m'è tolto più caro, Io non perdessi questo pe' miei carmi;*

says our Poet.[3]

Your Lordship will greet all friends and relatives on my behalf, begging you to keep me in their good graces until my return: which, with the Lord's

help, after the arrival of this letter, should not be much delayed. And to Your Lordship I commend myself with all my heart: may the Lord God keep you happy and well as you desire. Tomorrow or the day after,[4] at the latest, I embark[5] with the fleet for Goa, the captain here having warmly commended me to the general of Hormuz.

The 6th of July 1587.[6]

Of Your Most Magnificent Lordship,

Servant and kinsman.

> Sassetti, and from there to go on to Portugal; for which he must by now be on his way." [1] *Con ragionevole quantità di libri*. On his return to his homeland he brought a great number of Oriental codices, written in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish: a great part of which I believe now forms the rich collection of Oriental codices in the Palatine Library of Florence, lately transferred to the Royal Laurentian Library. — So Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti in the *Notizie sulla storia delle scienze fisiche in Toscana*, etc. (edited by Cav. Francesco Palermo), Florence, from the I. and R. Palatine Library, 1852. [2] *A parl.e*. Thus in the ms. [3] *Dice il nostro Poeta*. In Canto XVII of *Paradiso*; and note the variation, though slight, of this passage from how it reads in the printed editions [of Dante]. [4] *Postdomani* for *posdomani*; as one also finds *postscritta* and *postscritto* for *poscritta* and *poscritto*. [5] *Imbarco*. That is, *m'imbarco* [I embark]. [6] Received the 14th of April 1588. — Note in the ms.

CVII. To Maria Sassetti née Bartoli, in Florence.

Published.

He advises against marrying her daughter to an old man; and tells her, as usual, other family matters.

Most honored and dearest Sister.

I thought I had written to you, and upon sealing the letters I could not find yours, which will make me brief with this one. I have seen the whole account you gave me concerning your daughter Margherita; and since she is in Florence and I am in India, there is little I can answer. I will only tell you this, that seeing in these parts how unwillingly wives endure being without a husband, or how poorly they bear having one of wood or stone — which amounts to the same as one of 57 years — I urge you not to make so ugly a match;[1] because having within three years at the longest to think about her affairs will give you more trouble then than it does now. Besides which, putting a girl who was born yesterday to wipe the drool of a decrepit old man — you can imagine what consolation she will take from that; and lying in bed, one will want

[1] *Sì laido accoppiamento*. Margherita was married in that same year 1587 to Captain Francesco Carcherelli. As for the uncle's exhortation not to make the truly ugly match of a young girl with a sexagenarian, it must seem most just to everyone, and more than ever agreeable to women: for their greater satisfaction, I wish to add a *similiada* (as Sassetti would say) that is recounted in a sixteenth-century manuscript, most fitting to their appetite and to his witty observations. — Some young Florentine gentlemen, of good stock, were together in conversation; and for sport and jest they fell into a dispute as to whether a young woman should be more content with a husband of about 30 years, or one of 22 or less.

Those who said 30 gave as their reason that at that age men are more serious and mature, and stay at home at night, and remain more constant and assiduous with their wife. Those who said 22 or less gave as their reason that at that age they are more ardent, notwithstanding the charge brought against them of going out at night often, coming home late, and spending less time with their wife than those of 30. And being in this dispute, for a jest they asked the opinion of Madonna Bartolommea, wife of Tommaso Betti, a most witty and very good woman; who answered: that notwithstanding those of 22 years, or less, went out at night and came home late, yet whenever they came back, they came back young. — If a man of thirty is no longer to be called young, Sassetti is not wrong to call a man nearing sixty a decrepit dotard.

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to play, and the other will just stand there telling stories from his grandfather's time. So, by my advice, keep her at home longer, and bring yourself to bear anything else in this matter, because the times are growing very bad; and if one could read the tales of Boccaccio, I would tell you to read one about Messer Ricciardo di Chinzica,[1] and you would see that I advise you well. As for the expense that the household will feel in meeting this obligation, I understand it will not be small; but I do not advise you to sell the house, because I know the trouble of going about with one's slippers from one place to another: besides which, it is not so grand a palace that Roberto cannot in a short time put together what he would get for it. But for him to think that she is or was destined to become a nun by your word or wish is the thinking of a poor Christian and a man of little spirit; for there is no reason why he should become a friar any less than she a nun. And of this let enough be said.

I am sorry to hear the ruin you tell me of at the farm — the house that fell

down, the calf and the mares — one may say that Our Lord has touched you like Job in all things. Yet I have heard something good from you, which was learning that Biagiotta has returned as your tenant farmer: something will come of it. If I find her on your land, we shall see a little whether she will be as finicky as I once heard she was: for if we start to wrestle, either she or I must go under, and perhaps both of us.

As for Roberto's situation, that Francesco Franceschi is the driest thing among all merchants. One must be patient up to a point, and then go seek one's own remedy: nevertheless I am, as we might say, in India, and I can give you no other counsel. It will indeed be hard to expect Girolamo to start earning his keep as the first thing; unless you were to put him in Orsanmichele to serve at Mass, where those clerics help themselves along with the candle-ends as best they can.

As for Francesco's affairs, I have nothing to tell you: we were born to have little joy in this, and for our part we are such poor stuff that we deserve no better: we shall go on muddling along until one day we die, and nothing of ours will remain here

> [1] *Una di messer Ricciardo di Chinzica*. Day 2, Novella 10 [of the *Decameron*; the tale of a young wife married to an impotent old husband].

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after us. I see him toiling as you say, and I marvel that he can endure the hardship he has taken upon himself in serving that devil of a Spaniard. I imagine that the affairs of his household are meager, and I am sorry not to be able to go helping him now with something; and he too has harmed himself by sending Orazio here to me, who has cost me a pretty penny to send back. You can consider that in such a pilgrimage as this, I need help, and not to have the burdens of the household dumped upon me. His sister-

in-law will not be well pleased, and I am sorry for it; but let her have patience. I can be with you no longer.

When you see or write to our nuns, commend me to them, and have prayers said by them and by your children for me. Our Lord be with you. Farewell.

From Cochin, the 11th of December 1587.

Your brother.

CVIII. To Baccio Valori, in Florence.

Published.[1]

He treats somewhat of the languages and characters of the Chinese and other Eastern peoples; and touches upon their sciences and their government; then on some errors in his discourse on cinnamon, and speaks of the journey of Giambatista Vecchietti.

Most illustrious Sir.

So much good news have I received from you of yourself, that I can affirm to Your Lordship that no other letter has given me as much pleasure as yours; for[2] to be free of having to think of others' affairs, to hear that you enjoy the villa at Arcetri,[3] and at the same time that your only [son] as of then is well, and you in health[4] — these are all the things one could wish for. That

[1] Collated with the autograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana. [2] *Perocché*. Printed edition: *poiché* [since]. [3] *Si goda la villa d'Arcetri*. Most enjoyable among the many scattered upon that blessed hill; and two above all memorable for Guicciardini having dictated his history there, and Galileo his scientific treatises. [4] *E lei di salute*. Printed edition: *ed ella ancora di salute* [and she too in health]. In the Reggio edition, *suo unico fino allora* [his only (son) as of then] was badly and arbitrarily altered to *suo unico figlio allora* [his only son then]; whereas saying "as of then he is well" differs greatly from Sassetti's intention, which says "his [i.e., son, understood] only one as of then" — meaning the writer did not know whether Valori had had other male children after the one born some five years before, who did in fact remain always his only son.

ring had no need of cargo ships to be sent from Lisbon: I know not the reason for such delay. That country has the worst effect on men I have ever seen, and I have proved it[1] in many things — they become negligent in the service of others and tenacious of their own comfort. It seems to me that Carlo Velluti knew that the 60 *scudi* were excused, as far as squaring our accounts goes; and writing to me in great haste, because those ships departed without giving them time, he writes that he was not sending them; but when they come,[2] there will not be lacking some fine thing to delight with its novelty either the Lady your wife or your son, who, now grown, will perhaps enjoy seeing new things himself.

Certain alphabets I received from you in Lisbon, and I brought them here with me; but it was not possible for me to match any of them with anything in these parts. In China, it seems to me,[3] they lack an alphabet and simple characters or elements; and they make use of certain figures that signify a concept: which, being infinite, as concepts are many in number, make their writing most difficult — common to all those more eastern parts: as the Japanese, and to the south the Javanese, different from one another in language, as the Swiss from the Chaldeans, all having once been one and the same thing; the eyes and the flat face showing that they are all either Chinese or Tartars, were one to seek or be able to see the quintessence of it — difficult to find, because one cannot travel inland.

But of all those many marvels of theirs, I shall tell Your Lordship that Pietro Grifo,[4] whom you will well have known in Pisa — nephew of Plozio — who two years ago went there, writes me that apart from the great wealth of that king, which is gathered by infinite sorts of tyrannies, all the rest that is told of those marvels are express, public, and notorious lies; for no justice, no civil order, nor any other good thing is to be

[1] *A*. Printed edition: *in*. [2] *Venghino*. Printed edition: *vengono* [come]. [3] *Mi pare a*

me. Printed edition: *pare a me*. [4] *Pietro Grifo*. See p. 308, note 3.

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found there. The people are deceitful, ill-fortuned, envious, and full of bad character: and although all this is very different from the common report, I would rather believe this prudent man than the exaggerations of the Portuguese. As for sciences, they have none there; their entire study is in their laws, the soul of which, in place of justice, is money. It cannot be denied that there is some refinement in the arts, and above all the land is replete with all good things, and, as the Portuguese say, *abastada* [well-supplied].

I sent Your Lordship last year that notion of mine on *cinnamomum*, such as it was. The chest in which it was to come was loaded aboard a ship that capsized; and that island of Ceylon is now at[1] war, and I do not know when I shall manage to get more. It would perhaps have been better if the writing too had not come into your hands (if this could have been, without losing the other things), because there are necessary corrections to be made, certain errors concerning the fruit; which may serve as an argument for how much faith can be placed in those who give verbal reports in our parts about the things of India, since I let myself be deceived while having the thing before my eyes. I had left here in Cochin, when I returned to Goa last year, orders for them to make me a great jar of this fruit preserved, both to be able to show it to anyone who might wish to see it, and because the taste is aromatic and good, and tends from mastic to pistachio: but since such diligences are regarded by these people as foolishness, not to say something worse, I was not served; and in that place I had to be patient at the question put to me — “and what was that seed good for?” — which is the answer these people give to things that do not strike their fancy.

I have not since had occasion to converse with men of learning from whom

I might have drawn something worthy of coming to your knowledge. An astrologer fell into my hands, from whom I drew various things concerning the opinion they have here of the origin and duration of the world; and having had occasion to write to certain German gentlemen, that was, as we would say, the subject of the letter.

> [1] *Di*. Printed edition: *in*. [2] *Vi sono necessarie*. Printed edition: *vi è necessario*.

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As for new things to be told of these people, Signor Giambatista Vecchietti, who is still here and is leaving on these ships, did me the favor of asking me for a copy and is taking it; and if Your Lordship will have time to spend in hearing it, I am certain he will show it to you willingly: they are speculations, and therefore I do not intend to weary you with them further.

The said Signor Giambatista passed from Egypt to Syria, and through Armenia went to Persia, with a more fortunate outcome than that of the other gentleman whom the Lord Cardinal de' Medici was sending to Ethiopia; for having arrived at the king's court, he was dispatched thence at his pleasure, and having come to Hormuz, he passed here to India on the 20th of October; and is now leaving, and, Our Lord conducting him to safety, he will give particular news of those lands and the customs of those peoples — for having made himself master of that language, he will be able to do so much more fully than I.

He will tell Your Lordship what I believe you already know: that I am very much your servant, and I wish you from Our Lord much life and health.

In Cochin, the 11th of January 1588.

Of Your most illustrious Lordship,

Most affectionate servant.

CIX. To Lorenzo Giacomini, in Florence.

Previously unpublished.[1]

He discusses the effects of the magnetic lodestone.

Most esteemed Cousin.

I seem to recall that I wrote to you last year, so that I need not now go back over a letter I received from you. I do not have in memory any questions you put to me, nor any answer I may have given you. I have, however, heard with much pleasure of the effect the lodestone produces as vessels approach Elba. I should like to know what effects it produces on those who approach the pole — that is, who go to those very cold countries — because the observation of Lupicini assigns

> [1] Autograph in the Riccardiana, no. 2471. The substance of this letter is already published in the preface to Vol. IV, Part 2, of the *Archivio Storico Italiano*.

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as the reason for its turning in one direction rather than another the position of the same stone in…[1] part of the terrestrial globe: which we may believe, because if one goes around any clock-dial with a piece of lodestone, it so confounds the needle that the tip of the pointer turns now to the East (however well magnetized it may be), now to the West and now to the South, in accordance with the position of the lodestone that is near it. But across so great a distance of country as there may be from these unknown mountains to the Cape of Good Hope — which is at least a hundred degrees of latitude — with the medium that must be the vehicle of this force having been altered by so many rains and so many winds and so

many and such diverse constitutions of air, I cannot incline to make the efficient cause of this motion this…[2] which is between those mountains and the magnetized needle.

Add that every piece of lodestone has its North and South orientation, and each part attracts the part of the needle that is magnetized with it; that is, the North part of the lodestone attracts the needle by the tip of the arrow, and the South part attracts the needle from the end opposite the tip. Now, these mountains that are supposed to be at or near the North face our compasses with their South part, so that it would have to attract that part of the needle that is opposite to the tip, and not the tip that is magnetized with the opposite North part: an argument that seems to me insoluble; and for my part, I would incline to mix in some celestial virtue, whatever it might be. Which leads me to ask: in which direction would the lodestone turn if one were directly under the pole?

With these unknown celestial and influencing virtues, you will tell me, every doubt would be easily resolved: and yet, when I see in these parts that a plant contracts upon itself and becomes as if dry when touched by the hands; and on the other hand, that a root has the power to bend the will of a woman however cold — and many other things that may be kept under the pen, lacking the face of truth — I let myself be persuaded by these Gentiles [TN: i.e., Hindus] that there are plants and stones upon which the

> [1] The sheet is corroded. It appears to read: *q.<** [this]. — Of the word omitted here, only the first two and last two letters are legible: *si….ia*. I would deduce: *simpatia* [sympathy]. In the printed edition of the said *Archivio storico*, it was skipped over and not noted.

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seven[1] planets exert most particular influences, as they have observed and written in their books: whence they come to make their compositions and

beverages, the effects of which are, by those who understand no further, deemed diabolical.

So that, to return to the lodestone, and as that good fellow used to say, the terrestrial principle is not sufficient (in my opinion): nevertheless (*nosti hominem* [you know the man]), my speculation is like the building of the Lombard masons, who do not go very high with their works.

I have not yet read the book of our Messer Giorgio[2] [Bartoli], of which some friends wrote me with much praise. Would that he had not been taken from us so soon! It came with these ships, and after their dispatch, if God grants me the grace to return to Goa in health, and guards me from the hands of those corsairs who, on my coming here, spent an entire day making love to me [TN: i.e., pursuing him at sea], I shall read it all; and there was no doubt that I recognized in it the good judgment of Messer Giorgio: to whom may Our Lord have given a place of rest, and to you may He give all you desire, and guard you from harm.

In Cochin, the 17th of January 1588, *a nativitate*.

Of Your Lordship.

CX. To Bernardo Davanzati, in Florence.

Published.[3]

He describes the tree called Cadirà, from which is made the Catù, also called Catto or Casciù [TN: catechu, an astringent extract]; and he tells the manner of making it, and its properties and virtues.

The tree called *Cadirà* [TN: *khadira*, the Acacia catechu], from whose wood[4] the Indians make *Catù* [TN: catechu], grows wild throughout the coast of India, and abundantly in Cambay [TN: Gujarat]. Its roots are many and thick, and

> [1] *Setti* for *sette* [seven]; see the Glossary. As for the number of the planets, it has now quintupled. [2] *Messer Giorgio Bartoli*. This book of his was the *Trattato degli Elementi del parlar toscano*: a posthumous work, of which in 1584 the celebrated brother of the author, Cosimo Bartoli, published a second edition through the Giunti press in Florence, dedicating it to Giacomini; and recalled also by our Sassetti on p. 356. [3] Collated with three apographs: Rinuccini (now Magliabechiana), Capponi no. 80, and Cambiago. See the note 5 on p. 191. [4] *Del cui legno*. Printed edition: *del quale* [of which].

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the trunk is like[1] that of the plum tree and the almond tree, or larger; up which the branches grow alternating,[2] both in the height and around the circumference of the trunk, upon which grow certain[3] thorns like those of the brambles that bear blackberries in our hedges. The leaves are of a light green color, small and tiny, and they resemble those of the fir, placed upon the twigs in such a manner that in coming together they form an acute angle, and not a flat surface; upon which come certain round reddish growths, which, although small, occupy the whole leaf in breadth, and are

rough to the taste. The bark of the tree is rough and cracked, of a reddish color on the inside; and between this and the wood is another thin skin, almost yellow in color, and the pith of the wood tends to red, while on the outside it goes toward the color of the thinner skin. The wood is very dense; and cut crosswise it splits like that of guaiacum; and it is so heavy that placed in water it sinks to the bottom. The scent of the fresh tree is heavy, like that of elderberry. The taste of the pith shows the bitterness that is afterwards drawn from it, and even more[5] one recognizes the astringent quality: but neither the one flavor nor the other is found there in the intensity in which it is later found in its extract, which the Indians call *Catù*; which both Garzia de Orta and Cristóbal d'Acosta claim to be the *Lycium* of Dioscorides, as by the marks found in it, it seems one may affirm.

It is made from the said wood in this manner. The wood is chopped fine and ground upon the painters' stone, and[6] pounds of it are boiled in… pounds of water for the space of 24 hours; then the whole is strained, and put back to boil until[7] it becomes a substance harder than honey and softer than wax; which then solidifies, and the said troches are made of it, black on the outside and inside of a dark reddish tan: of these, taking into the mouth the quantity of half a hazelnut, they

[1] *Come del susino*. Printed edition: *come quello del susino* [like that of the plum tree]. [2] *Disincontrati*. Printed edition: *discontinuati* [discontinuous]; though then in the *Tavola*, etc., the new reading is registered. [3] *Cotali*. Printed edition: *certi* [certain]. [4] *Fanno le more*. Thus the Cambiago codex. Printed edition: *fanno mort* [?]. [5] *Più*. Missing in the printed edition. [6] This number is blank in the printed edition. [7] *Fino a che*. Printed edition: *fino a tanto che*.

dissolve with the moisture, without anything remaining or any crunching being heard, which is the sign of the genuine article. Its flavor, with a

bitterness not unpleasant to the taste, has a little sweetness and is astringent with such force that one feels the effect proceeding from the tongue and the palate all the way to the mouth of the stomach.

The Gentile Proprietor[1] wrote briefly the virtues of the *Cadirà* in this manner: "The *Cadirà* is bitter and harsh, it consumes phlegm and choler,[2] removes nausea and cough. It is good for the swellings that come in all the limbs, cures mange and leprosy, purifies the blood; and although it is a remedy for many other[3] ills, its proper virtue is against putrefied blood." The virtues of *Catù* are the same, except that being[4] the extract of the wood, it produces all the above-mentioned effects more powerfully.

And having conversed many times about this medicine with a Gentile [Hindu] physician, and about the manner of using it, although everything is virtually comprised in what the Proprietor has said above, I shall not fail to set down some particulars. The Malays[5] then, and the Chinese, to whom a great quantity of it is carried, chew it with lime and with betel in place of the *areca* or Indian hazelnut; for it loosens the superfluous phlegm from the whole cavity of the mouth, prevents the generation of decay, strengthens the gums, kills the worms that breed in the teeth, removes the pain, and makes the breath of good odor. Powdered, and taking a dram of it in 3 ounces of plain water — which is the common syrup in which they administer all medicines — it stops fluxes of every sort, strengthens the stomach, prevents vomiting, and is given with marvelous success[6] to those who spit blood; and it stops almost in an instant the excessive action of purgative medicines. Taken in the manner described above for a period of 15 days, it cures mange; and continued up to 50, it cleanses from leprosy,[7] the sick abstaining from moist, acidic, and salty foods.

Dioscorides wrote[8] that *lycium* was good against the bite of rabid dogs; of which affliction they have in India almost no knowledge[1] whatsoever,

although the region is very hot: so it is not to be wondered at if, while matching almost all the virtues of *Catù* with those Dioscorides assigns to *lycium*, they make no mention in India of this one, which is so[2] important.

> [1] *Scrisse*. Printed edition: *scrive* [writes]. [2] *Collora*. Printed edition: *collera* [choler]. [3] *Altri*. Missing in the printed edition. [4] *Egli*. Printed edition: *esso*. [5] *Malaci*. The Capponi codex has *Malacìni*. [6] *Successo*. Printed edition: *progresso* [progress]. [7] *Dalla lebbra*. Printed edition: *la lebbra*. [8] *Scrisse*. Printed edition: *scrive*.

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Midwives, with a decoction of 3 ounces of this *Catù* boiled in a flask of water, after childbirth wash the female organ to reduce it to its proper size.

The cited Proprietor is a very ancient Gentile [Hindu] physician who wrote in these parts on the subject of simples, and is called *Niganto* [TN: *Nighaṇṭu*, the Sanskrit pharmacological lexicon]. He treated of more than three thousand plants as briefly as is here translated; and all this work is in verse; and his sayings on this subject, and those of the other physicians who are studied by them, are common collected maxims, which among them have authority without contradiction; and many of them can be seen as drawn[3] from Hippocrates, or those of Hippocrates drawn from these people, as they maintain,[4] showing very ancient records — that in every age they knew more than they do now.

Among other things, I have seen a chapter on that definition of medicine, *Adjectio et ablatio* [addition and removal], treated with much method, showing how this definition applies disjunctively to all the cures that are performed, beginning from purgative clysters, and proceeding through all of them.

Their sciences are all written in a language which they call *Sanscruma*,[5]

which means “well articulated”: of which there is no memory of when it was spoken, while they possess (as I say) very ancient records. They learn it as we do Greek and Latin, and spend much more time on it, so that in six or seven[6] years they become masters of it: and today’s language has many things in common with it, among which are many of our words, and particularly of the numerals the 6, 7, 8, and 9 — *Dio* [God], *serpe* [serpent], and many others. Of their learned men Pliny wrote, making mention of them as philosophers.[7]

[1] *Nessuna*. Printed edition: *alcuna* [any]. [2] *Così*. Printed edition: *tanto* [so]. [3] *Tirate*. Printed edition: *tratte* [drawn]. [4] *Presumono*. Printed edition: *provano* [prove]. [5] *Sanscruma* or *Sansiruta*, according to the codices. Printed edition: *Sanicuta*. See p. 283, note 2. [6] *Sicché in 6 anni o 7*. Printed edition: *che in 6 o 7 anni*. [7] *Come di filosofi*. Printed edition: *come Filosofi* [as Philosophers].

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Herodotus, a most ancient[1] writer, makes mention of these Brahmins and their customs; so that one must not scoff at their claim that the sciences originated from here.

They are amazed to see me asking them about many of these things, because it has never happened to them before; and hearing some subject treated with method and from its principles, they look at one another’s faces, as one stares at a person who guesses rightly. One would have needed to come here[2] at 18 years of age to return with some knowledge of these most beautiful things.

[1] *Antichissimo*. Printed edition: *antico* [ancient]. [2] *Essere venuto qua*. Printed edition: *esserci venuto*.

CXI. To N.N.

Published.[3]

He speaks of the history of João de Barros and of that of Father Maffei, of the situation of Malabar, of the color of its inhabitants and of the cause of their blackness, and of their difference from the Ethiopians. He also discusses the kingdom of Cambay, Gujarat, China, the cities of Hormuz and Malacca, and the commerce of all those parts: and lastly of the voyage made by the gentleman of Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, sent to Ethiopia in the company of Giambatista Vecchietti.

Most magnificent and esteemed Sir.

Your writing me the news of those parts so fully and particularly,[1]

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which is most dear to me, is going at a manifest loss on your part, considering that nothing is transacted today[2] without expecting a return for everything one does — which I cannot give you; for your writing to me of the affairs of the king of Spain, his family connections and his wars, and my writing to you from here about the kings of Peru, of Cinganate and Turboli, is like paying a debt of a hundred thousand ducats with the husks of sweet lupins.

I went[3] thinking whether I could have given you news of 70 or 80 years of these parts, which had a bit more substance[4] than the modern ones, and you write me that you already had them in hand and were reading them.[5] And since in those volumes of voyages and navigations I know not what full history there may be[6] of these parts, I go conjecturing that you had in hand

the Portuguese Livy called João de Barros:[7] in whom it seems to me that the saying the English have on their lips when they happen upon some fine-looking person applies — or rather, the reverse applies, because the English say, “Oh, what a handsome man this would be if he were English!” — and of this history one might say, “Oh, how beautiful it would be, if it were not Portuguese!”

And let this not be referred to the language, but to the concepts and the methods observed by him, who in investigating and searching out the particulars of the information seems to me not to have

[3] Collated with and augmented from the apograph in the Rinuccini collection, now in the Magliabechiana. — It is uncertain to whom it was addressed; and we have been not a little uncertain whether it was proper to include it in the present Collection. On the one hand, it seemed inadvisable, having chanced upon not the author’s original but only a copy in a wretched hand; and what is worse, incredibly incorrect and full of truncations and lacunae; on the other, although many things in it are narrated in the preceding Letters, it nevertheless seemed to us that we had observed in it many items of information not reported by him elsewhere. Wherefore, moved by this consideration, we have at last resolved to include it, truncated and deficient as we have found it, hoping that even in such a form the kind and well-disposed readers will not be displeased by it. — To which notice drawn from the preface of the first editors, I must add this further one of my own: namely, that I was more fortunate than they in having found a copy from which to heal several passages and fill in the many large lacunae of the printed text; but not so fortunate that I too did not sometimes have to stop, and content myself with noting in the footnotes what in the text would perhaps have been open to criticism, as a work of conjectural interpretation rather than of uncertain reading, given the nature of the writing, curiously abbreviated and almost contracted in the manner of so many *etceteras*. If, however, this most important letter is not restored as it should be, neither will it remain battered and truncated as it was. I did not remove it from the last place already assigned to it by others, it lacking not only the address, but both the place and the year. Except that, from certain things also reported in Letters XCVII and CIII, I would believe it given from Cochin in 1586; and, very nearly, addressed to Bonciani. [1] *Diffusa e particolarmente*. Printed edition: *diffusamente*, etc. Although such

truncations are not much accepted when the first part of the preceding adverb does not have the sense of a full adverb but reduces to a mere noun, Bartoli saying this is a kind of grammatical grafting that does not hold — let the generous supply of choice examples and the final conclusion in the *Voci e Maniere* of Gherardini, Vol. I, § VII, p. 989, suffice. [2] *In*. Printed edition: *di*. [3] *Andai*. Printed edition: *andava* [I was going]. [4] *Un poco più stoffo*. The *un* excluded from the printed edition. For *stoffo*, see the note 5 on p. 346.

[5] *Avevi tra mano e leggevi*. Printed edition: *avevate tra mano e leggevate*. The usual interchange, noted at p. 188, note 3. [6] *Vi si sia*. Printed edition: *vi è*. [7] *Ivan de Barros*. The ms. reads, always with the Italian ending, *Ivano*, that is, Giovanni. De Barros was born about the year 1496.

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an equal, although with the royal arm he could do many things that no one else could perhaps do: and yet, in uncovering many things and customs of these parts, divisions of lands, states, and kingdoms, one sees that his diligence could do much, considering the trouble one has with any even the slightest thing one desires; and since[1] that man was a very good geographer, in this respect his readers can indeed remain satisfied. I believe also that in the truth of the history there is nothing to be desired, or at least he will not have this difficulty of anyone who disproves anything of his; but the manner,[2] the ideas, and the particulars are things one cannot[3] bear, because those many named captains, with the father, his office, and that of his sons — it is a thing not to be borne: although among the Portuguese themselves it is a very necessary thing, for Almeida, Meneses, and Noronha and Fidalgo are as common as laborers and artisans, each taking what we call the surname (they say[4] the *Alcunha*) as each one pleases; so that to distinguish one from another it is necessary to resort to the most accidental differences, which is also not enough. Nor does this suffice, because each one claims to have his share, and more, in all things; and if each is not satisfied, enmities and quarrels arise at once. Of which the

author himself excuses himself in the course of his history; but it is not enough, because one should have considered what was to come, and not the present and the satisfaction of individuals.

But be that as it may, as I tell you above, this author among the Portuguese is more than Livy among the Latins: which is why[5] I do not know how it came about that in the time of King Henry — that is, the Portuguese Cardinal — the task of writing the Histories of India from the beginning was given to one of the fathers of the Company of Jesus,[6] called Father Maffei,[7] who was summoned

> [1] *Come*. Printed edition: *perciocché* [for]. [2] *Ma il modo*. Ms.: *e 'l modo*. [3] *Si può*. Used impersonally. Printed edition: *si posson* [one can]. [4] *Dicono loro*. Printed edition: *dicono essi*. Pedantry already noted elsewhere. [5] *Per donde*. Printed edition: *donde*. [6] *Del Gesù*. Printed edition: *di Gesù*. [7] *Padre Maffeo*. Giampietro Maffei, a Jesuit from Bergamo: he lived from 1536 to 1605. His Latin history of the conquest of the Indies is as classically written as it is classically translated by the Florentine Francesco Serdonati, whom I have more than once had occasion to recall in these notes;

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from Rome for this purpose to Portugal; where he was when I embarked, and was writing in a very fine manner, as a Modenese gentleman, a friend of mine, told me, with whom that father shared some of his writings. He writes in Latin, and has a most beautiful style, being the same man who wrote certain reports that came from Japan, so that if you are not yet satisfied with João de Barros, wait a little, for this father will restore you so that you could wish for nothing more.

In the stories cited from João de Barros, in his second *Década* you will find in particular the description of Malabar, which, if I do not misremember, begins 4 leagues to the north of a point that the Portuguese, and also the

Indians,[1] call *Monte de li Chevi* [Mount of the Rats], meaning [mount] of the rats, on account of the plague of which a very principal city here was depopulated, as might perhaps one day happen to Goa, where they are so many and so fierce that they pass through walls from one side to the other; and when they are truly angry, they snap with their teeth like dogs about to bite: so that a sword would not have been unsheathed in vain against one of them — the sword they say Charles V unsheathed against a rat that crossed a desk where he[2] was writing, having those beasts in horror.

But, returning to Malabar, it begins here and ends[3] at Cape Comorin, which will be some 85 Portuguese leagues — that is the length. The width is more in some places, less in others, according to the space left by the mountains that follow the entire coast of India between their foothills and the western shore, Malabar being understood as everything from where the rain falls down to the sea; in which land grows cardamom, pepper, and cinnamon, of things known there [in Europe]. In provisions for living it is barren, little rice being harvested — rice being the bread of these peoples, the greater part of whom do not eat meat, and therefore do not attend much to raising cattle: yet the trade[4]

> and of whom we also have a very beautiful translation of the History of Genoa by Foglietta, and another of the three books of Seneca's *De Ira*, deserving of reprinting, with certainty of sure profit for the printers and of no less benefit for manners and letters. [1] *Anco gl'Indiani*. Printed edition: *e anche gl'Indiani*. [2] *Elli*. Printed edition: *esso*. [3] *Fornisce*. Printed edition: *finisce* [ends]. [4] *El tratto*. Printed edition: *il trattare* [the trading].

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with Christians and with Moors, who do eat meat — whence much money comes to them — makes them raise many chickens and other animals to sell for eating. Now, answering your question about the color of the native people here, I tell you that they are black, and on this very coast, the further

south the blacker; and going northward into Gujarat and those parts, they grow white; and the difference is so great that with some practice one immediately recognizes them on sight. But as for the blacks here in Malabar, it must be noted that although they are a treacherous black of the tightest hue, they differ from the Ethiopians or Negroes of Guinea, so that they are distinguishable, because the Ethiopians or Kaffirs, besides the color, have a snub-nosed flat face, thick lips, and their hair (which is their proper[1] distinguishing mark) tightly curled in fine ringlets; whereas these others, apart from the color, have faces like ours, no more and no less; and they have hair that falls straight like ours. Nor do I think that the cause of their being black in that manner can be anything other than the great heat of the sun, even though in various places on the same parallels some are found black and others white; and in the same land both differences exist, as happens on the island of São Lourenço [TN: Madagascar], where on the southern part they are coal-black, and on the part that goes more toward the equinoctial they are naturally white.

Upon which matter I have thought many times, and I believe that evident reasons can be assigned for it, sufficient to satisfy anyone: yet, since these are most difficult subjects, and to pronounce upon them is a dangerous thing, we shall leave them to other philosophers of higher speculation. It suffices that Herodotus and Empedocles were perhaps not entirely wrong to say that the seed of the Ethiopians was black, if one may argue from the parts of brute animals to those of men: I say brute animals, because among them too this difference exists, some being black Kaffirs and others white; which if perchance you did not believe me, Signor Giovanni Buondelmonti will attest to you with his Kaffir hens — meaning black ones: and of this let enough be said.

The kingdom of Cambay [TN: Gujarat] is great, as you say, and has a very rich and powerful king, but most avaricious — for that Great Mogul

[1] *Propia lor*. Printed edition: *loro propria*.

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swallows it up, there coming from that land three things so principal and necessary to all this Orient that without them it cannot live: the first is the most copious quantity of cotton cloths, and much spun cotton; the second is *anile*, that is, indigo; the third is *anfione*, that is, opium, on which the Moors of this region sustain themselves in such a manner that without it they die at once,[1] going but a single day without eating it: and this eating is not to gorge on it, but to take[2] as a medicine every day about the amount of a chickpea. Pliny[3] made mention of this people who eat opium, calling them *Opiophagi*. And just as that kingdom was powerful on account of the merchandise that grew there, so the native Moorish kings of Gujarat were so great and splendid that every sort of merchandise, and in whatever quantity it was brought there, was consumed. That king was driven out; and this Mogul put in a governor, whereupon the splendor and the consumption that existed before ceased, although today much merchandise is still consumed there.

Hormuz and Malacca are, as you say, still held by the Portuguese, on the way to those trades annihilating themselves even more than they are at present — if that can even be — having formerly been the light of all the Orient, both the one and the other, for the advantageousness of their positions; for in itself the one and the other is nothing: for Hormuz is an island of salt, and Malacca has nothing very good about it: I speak of the land, for since men can live there by going[4] to the forest and waiting for the graces of heaven, gathering whatever fruits they find on the trees and nothing more, there is no practice of tilling the land,[5] nor of doing any other thing that men are accustomed to do; whence it costs much more to live there than in Goa or any other land.[6] For the rest, all the best things

that you can[7] imagine and that can be asked for come there, beginning from diamonds and gold, and running through all earthly things. Those of China are such that one must see them, for they say they always appear greater than what is written or said about them. There is not in

> [1] *Di presente*. Omitted in the printed edition. [2] The printed edition: *e non ma piglianne*. [3] *Plinio*. After this name follows an adjective that appears to be *maggiore* [greater], that is, Pliny the Elder. [4] *Con l'andare*. The printed edition defectively: *con la…* [5] *Terra*. Printed edition: *la terra*. [6] This other *terra* [land] is omitted in the manuscript. [7] *Sapete*. Printed edition: *sappiate*.

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the world a capital so large that, brought to China for investment in whatever merchandise,[1] one cannot turn it over from one hour to the next, without any alteration[2] in the marketplace. Gold — if you wanted 300 pounds of it in a single day, at a price that, brought to India, yields 60 per 100. Silk comes here, and goes to Japan, in such quantity that it is beyond counting: copper, quicksilver, iron, alum of rock: and from there[3] camphor, porcelain, cinnabar, and so many other things that the memory is overwhelmed. Only[4] of silver, while having[5] much, they always have a great scarcity, because they hoard it as treasures, just as princes do with precious stones. And you may reckon that at the sight of a piece of eight, they sigh like a lover at the sight of his lady: and there, on an island called Macao, which is at the mouth of the river of Canton,[6] given to them by the king of China, 20 leagues from[7] the said city of Canton, the Portuguese reside under the name of people of Malacca, because this name Portuguese has been banned, many years since, from the kingdom of China, on account of outrages done to those people.

The conquest of this land of China falls within the portion of the Castilians, and the Portuguese remain there under the title of trade, and they maintain

the high justice; but so feeble that whoever has the most power is captain,[8] king, and god, as the Neapolitans say.

Of the Moluccas they hold a small piece on one of those islands, whence they are so afraid of being driven out that they continuously keep a galleon here so that (should the need arise) they can all embark at will. The Castilians went there and did a certain good piece of work in robbing certain people, but [did not] subjugate the whole island. But nothing more has been heard of it. That business hangs almost in the air, that trade being pursued more easily than it was carried on, as with many others, in…

> [1] *Per impieghi e 'n qualsivoglia mercanzia*. Printed edition: *per impiegarlo in qualsivoglia mercanzia*. [2] *Senza alterazione nessuna*. Printed edition: *senza alterar cosa nessuna*. [3] *Qua*. Left blank in the printed edition. [4] *Solo solo*. The printed edition does not repeat it. But these repetitions of the same word have more force, and were a delight to Sassetti. [5] *Tenerne*. Missing in the printed edition. [6] *Cantao*. Ms.: *Cantano*. [7] *Presso*. Printed edition: *per contrario* [on the contrary]. [8] From here to the next paragraph ("As for the spices," etc.) is an entire lacuna in the printed edition. I repeat, however, that some small interruptions have had to be made in the new text, where the abbreviations are inscrutable or where the page is worn away.

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of which there is no shortage, without thinking now of new conquests: for although there are more Portuguese than there have ever been, the fact that each one has given himself over to becoming a merchant has ruined both the military and the trade; so that, as for new conquests…

As for the spices that go by way of Mecca from this coast of India, and particularly pepper: little goes, and even less will go henceforth — not so much on account of our diligences, which are nonetheless something, as on account of the fashions that prevail, as Franco Sacchetti used to say. You must know, then, that for four years now pepper, which is the sinew of this

trade, has begun to go exclusively overland by ox-train northward, passing from here all the way to deepest Tartary in such great numbers that one cannot even imagine it, let alone believe it; for caravans[1] pass of two thousand and three thousand oxen, each carrying one or two *cantara*; and since this is something that is just beginning, one may believe it will go on progressing through its normal stages of growth and maturity. Other caravans, also of oxen, go from this land to the kingdom of Bengal and to Pegu, from where it crosses over to China and a thousand other places — so much so that for us these last two years little has been left, and in the coming ones even less will be left, since we have no silver to invest;[2] for if by sea this trade cannot be entirely halted, by land it can in no way be halted, there being no power [to stop it] in the countries through which it passes;[3] and when one pays 37 and 38 for what the merchants of these ox-trains pay 34, you can understand to what difficulty this trade has been reduced — which, for the sea-borne merchandise, is doubled by the danger the Moors face at sea from the Portuguese fleets, without whose license one cannot sail.

As for the quantity of *pimenta* [pepper], I discussed it with you last year; to which I refer myself,[4] … for what reason the southern

> [1] *Carovane*. This word is not clear in the ms., but the sense and its repetition four lines later confirm it. The printed edition reads *carrate* [cartloads]. [2] From here to the end of the paragraph is another lacuna in the printed edition. [3] [Editor's note:] It appears, and yet does not appear: and although all of it is gathered in this land of India from beyond the… above the state of Reamus [?], to the great profit of the duties that are paid to them by whoever… their eyes. [4] Ms.: *invitamente el parere mio* [?].

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land was not discovered; which is the very same thing you say. And it is seen by experience that where the sun is weak, it does not produce much

gold, nor those other things that make us go about the world; and if Sweden and Norway were not today discovered and populated,[1] no more Herculeses nor such great strapping men would go about the world.

It remains for me to answer you on two points: one is why the ships do not depart from here in India for Portugal together,[2] as they depart from Portugal for India — where they make a manifest error; for if they departed just as they are ready, one after the other, they would not all be put at risk, as happened this past year, of being lost or all turning back: they say it is because going together they can defend themselves from anyone who might attack them — for no sooner are they in the river of…[3] than each goes its own way, and see you again in India. From here to Portugal, the important thing in this navigation is to depart at the beginning of January, when the winds blow from astern; and whoever departs later often suffers hardship. And since the ships, on account of the…[4] cannot be loaded except one at a time, whichever is loaded first departs first and goes with God's blessing; and the others follow[5] as they are loaded and dispatched.[6]

I conclude briefly this letter of mine with the matter of that gentleman whom the Cardinal de' Medici was sending to Ethiopia to Prester John,[7] who departed when you wrote me about it the first time, and Vecchietti with him. The latter came as far as Basra, at the mouth of the Euphrates: he did get past the Turkish fleet[8] at Hormuz, on which he had traveled,[9] and was robbed by certain Arab fishermen-pirates,[10] banded together under the captain of Hormuz. He was wounded in 5 or 6 places in combat: he escaped, having lost everything, and

[1] Ms.: *cenendo q.ì mi in dono i Portoghesi che che elle si stan.° rode.* [2] *Giuntamente*. Printed edition: *congiuntamente* [together]. [3] Ms.: *Cascais*. [4] Ms.: *primaneza*. Perhaps *permanenza* [stay, duration]. [5] *Seguentemente*. Printed edition: *susseguentemente*. [6] The printed edition, after its usual volley of ellipsis marks, reconnects the discourse with "On the matter of that gentleman," etc. [7]

Prete Ianni. See the note on p. 290. [8] *Bene passò in Ormuz la flotta de' Turchi*. Printed edition: *e passò in Ormuz sulla flotta de' Turchi* [and passed to Hormuz on the Turkish fleet]. [9] *Sopra la quale è passato*. Missing in the printed edition. [10] Printed edition: *pescatori fu ferito*, etc. [fishermen, was wounded].

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came to Hormuz, and from there to Goa, whence he departed for Ethiopia at the time I left for here. There remained crippled[1] a man who had been traveling with him, who returned with this fleet to Ethiopia, and said…[2]

Vecchietti was going to Persia, and since he arrived in Alexandria to pass from there with the caravans to Syria, nothing more has been heard of him. If he had been present at the great battle, which is truly said to have taken place where, they say, the entire Turkish army was destroyed, including the Pasha General, and nine hundred pieces of artillery,[3] he would have seen a thing worth seeing.[4]

May God grant good success to the one and the other.[5]

[1] *Storpiato*. Missing in the printed edition. [2] *Che* (the ms. adds) *essM pass… se ne tornò con quest'armata lent.a nell'Etiopia e dsle q.to ella può L…* [3] *Per el Bassa generale, e novecento pezzi d'artiglieria*. Supplied from the ms. [4] *Da esser veduta*. Ms.: *da essere in veduta*. [5] Here the manuscript also ends, and here end the Letters of Filippo Sassetti. *Belle!* ["Beautiful!"] I shall exclaim in closing, as by another hand is already written at the head of many of his autographs; and may God grant good success to my labors.

Select Glossary & Index

Terms, currencies, persons, and places appearing in the India Letters (LXXX–CXI)

I. Glossary of Indian, Portuguese, and Trade Terms

Currencies and Units of Measure

Basalucco (*basalucco*, pl. *basalucchi*). A unit of currency used in Portuguese India. Sassetti notes that 400 basalucchi equal six Castilian *reales* (Letter CII).

Bar. A unit of weight used in Ceylon for measuring cinnamon. Sassetti gives it as 360 pounds of 16 ounces; Carletti's *Viaggi* gives 400 pounds (Discourse on Cinnamon).

Cantaro (*cantara*, pl. *cantara*). A unit of weight varying by region, roughly 50–60 kg. Used throughout for measuring pepper loads.

Conto. A large unit of account, signifying 100,000 (sometimes a million). Used in the finger-counting system described in Letter CII.

Fanois. A small local currency of Malabar. The king of Cochin is described as once having been "a petty king of few fanois" (Letter CIII).

Larin (*larino*, pl. *larini*). A silver coin of Persian origin, widely used in Indian Ocean trade. Each worth about one and a half Castilian *reales*. Described as "a coin of the finest silver… minted in Persia" (Letter C).

Marco. The mark: a unit of weight for precious metals, used especially for gold. Mozambique gold dust is valued at 90 seraphins per mark (Letter C).

Pagoda (*pagode*). A gold coin of southern India. Sassetti describes horses paying 40 pagodas in export duty: "of minted gold, which are as many gold *scudi* in gold coin" (Letter C).

Parafino (*parafino*, pl. *parafini*). Possibly a variant of *serafino/xarafino*. Used for the price of cinnamon in Ceylon (Discourse on Cinnamon).

Real (*reale*, pl. *reali*). The Castilian silver real, the dominant European trade coin in the Indian Ocean. The "piece of eight" (*reale da otto*) is the standard unit of reference throughout the letters.

Seraphim (*serafino*, pl. *serafini*; also written *xarafino*). A gold coin used in Portuguese India, minted in Goa. Each worth seven and a half *giulii*, or approximately six *reales*. The principal unit of account in Sassetti's commercial letters. Marcucci notes the form *serafini* in preference to *xarafini* (Letter C, footnote).

Xaraffo (*xaraffo*, pl. *xaraffi*; also *saraffo*). A money-changer or banker. From the Arabic *ṣarrāf*. Sassetti connects the word to the coin *serafino/xarafino*, and notes a possible mention in Boccaccio or the *Novellino* (Letter CII). The *x* serves "in the Spanish manner for *s*."

Zecchino (*zecchino*, pl. *zecchini*). The Venetian gold sequin, also used generically for gold coins. Mecca trade ships bring back "almost nothing but zecchini" (Letter C).

Trade Goods and Natural Products

Anfione (*anfione*). Opium. From the Arabic. One of the three indispensable exports of Gujarat, "without which the Moors of this region die at once" (Letter CXI). Sassetti cites Pliny's term *Opiophagi* for opium-eaters.

Anile (*anile*). Indigo dye. From Portuguese *anil*, itself from Arabic/Sanskrit. One of the principal exports of Gujarat (Letters C, CXI).

Areca. The areca or betel nut (*Areca catechu*), chewed with betel leaf and

lime throughout India and Southeast Asia. Also called “Indian hazelnut” (*avellana indica*) (Letter CX).

Betel (*betle*, *betre*). The leaf of *Piper betle*, chewed with areca nut and lime as a stimulant. Described throughout the letters. The Zamorin gives betel from his own hand as a mark of supreme honor (Letter CIII).

Cadirà (*Cadirà*). The catechu tree (*Acacia catechu*), from Sanskrit *khadira*. Subject of the detailed botanical-pharmacological description in Letter CX.

Caismanis. A Malay term meaning “sweet wood,” identified by Sassetti as the common name for inferior cinnamon, from which the Latin *cassia* derives (Discourse on Cinnamon).

Canfora. Camphor. Imported from China (Letter C).

Catù (*Catù*; also *Catto*, *Casciù*). Catechu: the astringent extract of the *Cadirà* tree. Identified by Garzia de Orta and Acosta as the *Lycium* of Dioscorides. Described in full in Letter CX.

Caurim (*Caurim*; Portuguese *Búzio*). Cowrie shells, gathered in the Maldive Islands and used as currency in Bengal for small purchases. Sassetti notes that in Europe women use them, pounded and distilled, as a cosmetic wash (Letter C).

Ciambellotto (*ciambellotto*). Camlet: a fine fabric, originally of camel or goat hair. Brought from Mecca (Letter C).

Cinnamomo (*cinnamomo*). The *cinnamomum* of the ancient writers (Dioscorides, Pliny, Galen). The subject of Sassetti’s extended *Discourse on Cinnamon*, in which he argues it is the whole stalk of the cinnamon plant, not the stripped bark alone.

Darchini. The Persian name for fine cinnamon, meaning "wood of the Chinese" (Discourse on Cinnamon).

Galanga (*galanga*). Galangal, an aromatic rhizome imported from China (Letter C).

Gherofano (*gherofano*, pl. *gherofani*; also *grofano*). Cloves. From the Moluccas exclusively. The clove trade is a recurring subject, especially the Ternate affair (Letters C, CIII).

Legno aloè. Aloe wood (agarwood): a fragrant wood imported from Southeast Asia via Malacca (Letter C).

Macis. Mace, the spice derived from the covering of the nutmeg. From Banda (Letter C).

Mordaxi (*mordaxi*; also *Mordicin*). A deadly disease prevalent in India, killing within 24 hours. Symptoms include vomiting, blood loss, and loss of sensation. Attributed to excessive consumption of sweet fruits, pork, preserves, and water. Marcucci identifies it as cholera. Sassetti describes two dramatic cures with porcupine stone (Letter CI).

Niganto (*Niganto*). The Sanskrit pharmacological lexicon *Nighaṇṭu*, treating more than three thousand plants. Sassetti had portions translated through a Hindu physician. Described as being "all in verse" (Letters CIII, CX).

Pepe (*pepe*). Pepper. The foundation of Portuguese India's commerce and the central commodity of Sassetti's commercial world. He notes that 25,000 *cantara* can be loaded annually, and describes the new overland ox-caravan routes that are undermining the maritime monopoly (Letters C, CXI).

Pietra bazar (*pietra bazari*; also *belzuar*, *bezoardo*). Bezoar stone: a calculus found in the stomachs of goats, reputed to have medicinal and anti-poison properties. Sassetti is skeptical: "I believe in these marvels up to a certain point" (Letter CI).

Pietra di porcospino. Porcupine stone: a calculus attributed to porcupines, with an intensely bitter taste. Sassetti describes its testing (tongue test) and use (dissolved in water) against *mordaxi*, and sends one to Canigiani (Letter CI).

Pimenta (*pimenta*). Portuguese for pepper. Used interchangeably with Italian *pepe* throughout the letters.

Porcellana (*porcellana*). Chinese porcelain, described as "a very great merchandise" (Letter C).

Rasce (*rasce*). A lightweight woolen fabric imported from Portugal, for which there is "now little demand" in India (Letter C).

Maritime and Colonial Terms

Barra (*barre*). The sandbar at the mouth of a harbor, formed by monsoon-driven sand deposits. Portuguese term. Sassetti explains how southern winds pile sand and northern winds clear it (Letter C).

Casa da Índia (*casa d'India*). The Portuguese customs house in Lisbon for goods arriving from India. Sassetti warns that officials there "take many similar things, and say it is for the service of His Majesty" (Letter CIII).

Estado da India. The Portuguese "State of India": the chain of fortified trading posts, naval bases, and customs houses stretching from East Africa to the Far East.

Fidalgo (*fidalgo*, pl. *fidalghi*). Portuguese minor nobleman. From *filho d'algo* (son of something). Captains and fidalgos are the main consumers of European goods in India (Letter CIII).

Fusta (*fusta*, pl. *fuste*). A light galley used for coastal warfare and transport in the Indian Ocean. The Viceroy arms one for Britti's journey (Letter CIII).

Galeazza (*galeazza*). A galleass: "a little lower than galleons and longer, but in other respects handled as high-sided vessels" (Letter CIII).

Giunco (*giunco*). A junk: a Chinese-style vessel. "Made in the manner of the Chinese, that sails these seas: it carries three rudders, and either end serves as its bow" (Letter CXI).

Irmãos d'Armas. Portuguese: "Brothers in Arms." The formal alliance between the Portuguese and the king of Cochin (Letter CIII).

Mattalotaggio (*mattalotaggio*). Ship's mess; the provisions for living aboard during a voyage (Letter CIV).

Monsone (*monzao*, *monsone*). The monsoon: the seasonal wind system governing all Indian Ocean navigation. "The whole summer, that is from September to June" (Letter C). Sassetti describes how it determines the annual shipping calendar.

Nau (*nau*, *nave*). Ship, specifically the large Portuguese carrack used for the India run.

Paghei (*paghei*, pl. *pagheis*). A type of small coastal vessel, carrying about 400 *salme* (Letter C).

Indian Social and Cultural Terms

Amocchi (*amocchi*; sing. *amocco*). Warriors sworn to fight to the death at their king's command. From Malay *amuk*, the origin of English "to run amok." Described in detail in Letter CIII: "at the command to go and die… they move with that fury that can proceed from a desperate man, and like fire they spare nothing living."

Bazaar (*bazarro*, *bazar*). A marketplace. Marcucci notes the distinction from *pietra bazar* (the bezoar stone), explaining that *bazaar* means "a place assigned to commerce, a square, a market" (Letter C, footnote).

Bramano/Bramino (*Bramano*, *Bramino*; also *Bragmene*). Brahmin: a member of the priestly and learned caste, the highest in the Hindu social hierarchy. Sassetti interacts with Brahmin physicians and scholars throughout, and records their "amazement" at his systematic questioning (Letter CX).

Ciattino (*ciattino*, pl. *ciattini*). A member of the merchant caste. From *Chetti* (Tamil *Ceṭṭi*). "The third rank of people in order of nobility" (Letter CII).

Gentile (*gentile*, pl. *gentili*). Hindu. The standard sixteenth-century European term for non-Christian, non-Muslim Indians, from the Latin *gentilis* (pagan).

Moro (*moro*, pl. *mori*). Moor: the standard sixteenth-century term for Muslims, whether Indian, Arab, or African.

Nairo (*nairo*, pl. *nairi*). Nair: the warrior caste of Kerala. "The Nairs and soldiers keep to the palm groves toward the hills" (Letter CIII).

Sanscruta (*Sanscruma*; also *Sansiruta*). Sanskrit. Sassetti's transliteration of the name, which he explains as meaning "well articulated." The

language in which “their sciences are all written” (Letter CX). See the Translator’s Introduction, §V, for the significance of his observations on Sanskrit–European cognates.

Zamorino (*Zamorino*). The Zamorin: the hereditary ruler of Calicut (Kozhikode), styled as emperor of Malabar. Sassetti visited him in person and left a vivid description of his palace, person, and manner (Letter CIII).

Place Names

Balagate (*Balagate*). The Deccan plateau, from *Bal-ghat* (above the Ghats). The interior whence Gentile merchants come to the coast (Letter CII).

Bisnagar (*Bisnagar*). Vijayanagara, capital of the great Hindu empire of southern India.

Calicut (*Calicut*). Kozhikode: the principal city of the Zamorin on the Malabar coast. Sassetti visits in 1585–86 (Letter CIII).

Cambaia (*Cambaia*). The kingdom and port of Cambay in Gujarat, source of textiles, indigo, and opium.

Chaul (*Ciaul*, *Caul*). A Portuguese-held port north of Goa.

Cingal (*Cingal*). The Indian name for Ceylon (Sri Lanka), from Sinhala.

Cochin (*Coccino*, *Cocchino*, *Cocchio*). Modern Kochi: the Portuguese pepper-loading port in Kerala, and Sassetti’s primary residence.

Dacen (*Dacen*). Aceh, the sultanate at the northern tip of Sumatra, a major pepper-exporting rival to the Portuguese.

Dabhol (*Dabul*). A port on India’s western coast, held by the Moors,

involved in the Mecca trade.

Goa. Capital of the Portuguese Estado da India and seat of the Viceroy. Sassetti's other principal residence.

Honavar (*Onor*). A Portuguese fortress on the Karnataka coast, where Sassetti witnessed a cure of *mordaxi* (Letter CI).

Macao (*Macao*). The Portuguese trading post at the mouth of the Pearl River, near Canton. "The Portuguese reside under the name of people of Malacca, because this name Portuguese has been banned… from the kingdom of China" (Letter CXI).

Malacca (*Malacca*). The Portuguese-held port on the Malay peninsula, entrepôt for the spice trade with the Moluccas and China.

Mangalore (*Mangalor*). A Portuguese fortress on the Karnataka coast, site of the second *mordaxi* cure (Letter CI).

Moluccas (*Molucco*, *Malucco*). The Spice Islands (Maluku), sole source of cloves.

Montughi (*Montughi*; also *Montui*). A village near Florence where the Sassetti family had a villa. Sassetti promises to tell his friends the full India story "at Montughi" (Letter C).

Panane (*Panane*). Ponnani: a port near Cochin where the Portuguese planned to build a fortress per the peace terms with the Zamorin (Letter CIII).

Taprobana (*Taprobana*). The ancient name for Ceylon (Sri Lanka), used by Pliny and Ptolemy.

Ternate (*Terenate*). An island in the Moluccas, site of the Portuguese-

clove-trade conflict described in Letter CIII.

II. Index of Persons

Abbas, Prince (later Shah Abbas the Great of Persia, r. 1588–1629). Mentioned in Vecchietti's letter (CVI bis) as assembling an army in Khorasan.

Acosta, Cristóbal d' (c. 1515–1594). African-born naturalist, author of *Tratado de las Drogas y Medicinas de las Indias Orientales*. Repeatedly cited and critiqued in the Discourse on Cinnamon.

Alamanni, Luigi (the Younger). Delivered Sassetti's funeral eulogy at the Academy of the Alterati.

Amato Lusitano (João Rodrigo, 1511–1568). Portuguese Jewish physician. Criticized in the Discourse on Cinnamon. Mattioli called him "senseless and fit for chains."

Bartoli, Giorgio (d. c. 1586). Florentine scholar. His posthumous *Trattato degli Elementi del parlar toscano* is discussed in Letters CV, CVIII, and CIX.

Bonciani, Francesco (academic name: *Aspro*). Member of the Alterati. His "new courtliness" prompts Sassetti's critique of Castiglione's *Cortegiano* (Letter CII). Possibly the recipient of Letter CXI.

Bondelmonti, Giovanni (called *Vecchino*, "Little Old Man"). Associate who traveled in India and returned to Florence in 1585. Author of supplementary Letter LXXXIX bis on Indian customs. Sassetti describes his aging: "the name *Vecchino* no longer suits him" (Letter CI).

Britti, Giambatista. Gentleman in the service of Cardinal Ferdinando de'

Medici, sent on a mission to Ethiopia. Survived a pirate attack in the Persian Gulf, was wounded six times, drifted for days in a dismantled vessel. His adventure is narrated in Letter CIII.

Canigiani, Lorenzo. Florentine friend and recipient of Sassetti's longest ethnographic letters (XCII, XCVI, CI).

Carletti, Francesco (1573–1636). Florentine merchant-traveler whose *Viaggi* are cited by Marcucci in footnotes on Indian weights and the disease *mordaxi*.

Castiglione, Baldassarre (1478–1529). Author of *Il Cortegiano* (*The Courtier*), critiqued by Sassetti in Letter CII.

Davanzati, Bernardo (academic name: *Silente*). Florentine scholar, translator of Tacitus. Recipient of Letter CX, containing the catechu description and the Sanskrit passage.

Ferdinando de' Medici, Cardinal (1549–1609; Grand Duke of Tuscany from 1587). Recipient of Letters XCIV and CIV. Sassetti addresses to him the extraordinary proposal for a 7–8 year circumnavigation.

Francesco I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany (1541–1587). Recipient of Letters LXXXIII, XCIII, and CIII. Sassetti sends him seeds, jasper stones, and a Chinese silk pavilion worth 1,000 seraphins.

Galen (129–c. 216 AD). Greek physician. Frequently cited in the Discourse on Cinnamon for his descriptions of *cinnamomum*.

Giacomini, Lorenzo. Florentine cousin and fellow intellectual. Recipient of Letter CIX on the lodestone.

Grifo, Pietro. A Florentine who traveled to China; nephew of Plozio. His

skeptical report on China — "apart from the king's wealth… all the rest are express lies" — is quoted in Letter CVIII.

Jones, Sir William (1746–1794). British Orientalist who in 1786 proposed the common ancestry of Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin. Sassetti's observation of Sanskrit–European cognates (Letter CX, 1588) predates Jones by two centuries.

Magrera, Filippo. A Milanese companion who cured the king's scrivener of *mordaxi* with porcupine stone at Honavar (Letter CI).

Marcucci, Ettore (fl. 1855). The editor of the 1855 Le Monnier edition of Sassetti's letters. His footnotes, variant readings, and glossary accompany the text throughout.

Mattioli, Pietro Andrea (1501–1577). Italian physician and botanist, author of the celebrated commentary on Dioscorides. Frequently cited in the Discourse on Cinnamon and in Sassetti's remarks on cinnamon water (Letter C).

Neretti, Orazio. Sassetti's constant companion in India and executor of his testament. Author of his Latin epitaph. Commends himself to various recipients through Sassetti's letters.

Orta, Garzia de (c. 1501–1568). Portuguese physician in Goa, author of *Colóquios dos simples e drogas da India* (Goa, 1563). Repeatedly cited in the Discourse on Cinnamon.

Pliny the Elder (23–79 AD). Roman naturalist. His *Natural History* is the most frequently cited classical source in the Discourse on Cinnamon and in the letters on Indian natural history.

Redi, Francesco (1626–1697). Florentine physician and naturalist. Cited

by Marcucci for debunking the reputed marvels of Indian medicines: "many famous medicaments from Africa, from the East and West Indies… have proved of no value in practice" (Letter CI, footnote).

Rinuccini, Alessandro (academic name: *Ardito*). Florentine poet and friend. Recipient of Letters XCVIII and CII.

Rovellasco, Giambatista. Florentine merchant who held Portuguese pepper contracts and enabled Sassetti's passage to India. "After God, the cause of my satisfying this desire of mine to see these parts" (Letter CIV). His failure to renew the pepper contract leaves Sassetti's future uncertain.

Saladini, Michele (academic name: *Saladino*). Florentine friend. Recipient of Letter XCV; mentioned as a faithful correspondent throughout.

Sassetti, Maria (née Bartoli). Sassetti's sister in Florence. Recipient of six letters on family matters, including the famous advice against marrying her daughter Margherita to a 57-year-old man (Letter CVII).

Sassetti, Roberto. Sassetti's nephew, son of his sister Maria. Working in a Florentine counting-house. Sassetti urges him to master bookkeeping rather than chase salary (Letters CVI, CVII).

Strada, il Signor (Bartolommeo Gatteschi). A physician known by this nickname. Mentioned at the end of Letter CI in connection with the porcupine stone.

Strozzi, Giambatista (academic name: *Tenero*). Florentine poet and member of the Alterati. Recipient of Letter LXXXVIII on the monsoon.

Valori, Baccio. Florentine scholar and close friend. Recipient of Letters LXXXIV, XCI, CV (with the Discourse on Cinnamon), and CVIII. The most scholarly of Sassetti's correspondents after Vettori.

Valori, Francesco. Florentine friend. Recipient of Letters LXXXV, LXXXIX, and the great Letter C surveying the entire Indian Ocean trade system.

Vecchietti, Giambatista (c. 1552–1619). Florentine Orientalist, "great traveler, man of letters, and most accomplished master of the Oriental languages." Author of supplementary Letter CVI bis, describing his escape from Persia with a collection of Oriental manuscripts. Lodged with Sassetti in Goa in 1587. Later delivered Sassetti's funeral oration in Florence.

Vettori, Piero (1499–1585). The great Florentine humanist and textual scholar. Recipient of Letter XCVII. Died at 87 during the period of these letters; Sassetti mourned him as an irreplaceable loss (Letter CV).

Note: This glossary and index cover the India letters (LXXX–CXI) only. For Marcucci's full glossary of Sassetti's vocabulary across all 111 letters, see the Spoglio di Voci e Modi di Dire *in the 1855 edition.*